





DHANVANTARI'S BLESSING



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A Personal Foreword

On perseverance:

*There are two ways of attaining an important end: force and perseverance;
the silent power of the latter grows irresistible with time.*

-Sophie Swetchine

It is no great secret that as a new variant makes its rounds every few months (we seem to be nearing the end of the entire Greek alphabet), the cost of materials, logistics, resources, and even "Covid surcharge percentages" are now added into buyer's premiums *cough* (you know who you are). Inevitably this uncertainty leads to inflation, instability in the stock market, foreign tensions, and abundant gallery closures. Generally, tangible assets (such as art) are an excellent way to diversify these risks, but I am not writing to advise you on your financial portfolio, nor am I in any way a financial advisor—that being said, NFTs are jpegs.

One of the most stubborn, willful, brilliant, strong-willed, and relentless forces of nature comes to mind when I read the above quote by Sophie Swetchine. It is the living institution of Ramesh Kapoor. He did not choose to select one or the other, as he entered this field at a time when force was necessary, and through this his irresistible strength is understood and respected to this day. Each of his trials and tribulations before coming to and establishing himself in the USA alone could produce a trilogy.

It is from his personal struggles, triumphs, and refusal to quit, that I too will continue to do the same. Kapoor Galleries will continue to remain an institution and promote the culture and scholarship of the arts of India and the Himalayas.

A special thank you to Carly Johnson and Sophia Williamson, who have co-curated the selection and exhibition *Dhanvantari's Blessing* with the utmost attention to detail; cultivating with a refined eye a bountiful crop of both historical importance and aesthetic pleasure.

Sincerely,



Sanjay Kapoor

3.16.2022



Introduction

It is with great pleasure and pride that we present Kapoor Galleries' 2022 catalog, *Dhanvantari's Blessing*. Dhanvantari, the four-armed or cosmic avatar of Lord Vishnu, is the Hindu god of medicine and the physician of the gods. It was also he who emerged from the primordial Ocean of Milk holding the vessel of *amrita*, the elixir of immortality. After two long years of the pandemic, there finally seems to be a light at the end of the tunnel—may Dhanvantari shepherd you into a healthy future.

This catalog is a celebration of the gallery's nearly fifty years of success as a family enterprise, and as such, is dedicated to the memory of Urmil Kapoor (1941-2018). Together with Ramesh Kapoor, she helped bring the field of Indian and Himalayan art to where it is today. After India's partition in 1947, Ramesh left Pakistan along with his parents and migrated from Lahore to Jalandhar, India. There, the government allocated his father an empty store where he could establish his own business. After a thrift merchant offered him an entire private library, Ramesh's father started a rental library, catering to Indian refugees whose displacement left them with ample time to read. This led to the acquisition of illustrated books and manuscripts, which helped propel the Kapoor family into the field of the fine art of Indian miniature painting. When Ramesh finished college in 1958 and joined his father in business, the two worked together to establish relationships with museums and universities, supplying these institutions with coveted masterworks. Ramesh and Urmil married in 1967, and witnessing an increasing European and American interest in Indian art, they immigrated to the United States and established Kapoor Galleries Inc. in New York City in 1975.

Since establishment, Kapoor Galleries Inc. has played an instrumental role in educating the public about the ancient and classical fine arts of India and the Himalayas while encouraging interest amongst both collectors and institutions. Ramesh and Urmil Kapoor have guided some of the most significant public and private collections of the 20th and 21st centuries, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, the San Diego Museum of Art, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the Norton Simon Museum, the Minneapolis Institute of Art, Princeton University Art Museum, and Yale University Art Gallery.

We would also like to take this opportunity to extend our deepest gratitude to those who have lent their knowledge and support for this endeavor: **Dr. Pratapaditya Pal, Dr. Daniel Ehnbohm, Dr. Gursharan Sidhu, Dr. Gautama Vajracharya, Mitche Kunzman, Jeff Watt, Steve Kossak, Dr. Vidya Dehejia, Dr. Harsha Dehejia, Dr. John Guy, Dr. B.N. Goswamy, Dr. John Seyller, Pujan Gandhi, Dr. Emma Stein, Dr. Denise Leidy, Dr. Zoe S. Kwok, Laura A. Weinstein, and Henry Houston.**

Enjoy this catalog, and we look forward to welcoming you to Kapoor Galleries!

Talwar engraved with images of the ten avatars of Vishnu

Rajasthan, 19th century

Sword: 34 ¼ in. (87 cm.) long

In scabbard: 36 ¼ in. (92 cm.) long

The Indian saber or *talwar* consists of a curved blade and an all-metal hilt with disc-shaped pommel and integral quillons. This distinctive Indo-Muslim hilt has its origins in medieval western India, while the curved blade can be traced to the influence of the Turco-Mongol dynasties in the late medieval period. The marriage of these arms practices gave rise to the *talwar*, which became the most popular sword on the Subcontinent by Mughal times.

Here, the finely decorated hilt incorporates pointed langets, a centrally swollen grip, and a disc pommel, all of which have been overlaid with elaborate gold floral designs. The knob protruding from the pommel is pierced to allow for a wrist strap cord that is embroidered with eight-point star designs. A deep blue velvet scabbard with gold chape accompanies the sword. For a comparable 19th-century gold-embellished hilt, see the collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum (acc. 112-1852). Note the similarities in the pointed langets, convex quillon ends, centrally swollen grip, disc-shaped pommel with knob, and intricate foliate designs.

The present wootz steel blade is engraved with the ten avatars of Vishnu: Matsya (the fish), Kurma (the tortoise), Varaha (the boar), Narasimha (the man-lion), Vamana (the dwarf-god), Parasurama (the Brahman warrior), Lord Rama (the perfect man), Lord Krishna (the divine statesman), Balarama (Krishna's elder brother), and Kalki (the mighty warrior prophesied to end the *Kali Yuga*). Although the decoration of this blade is quite unique, another example of a *talwar* blade displaying Vishnu's ten avatars resides in the collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum (acc. 3418&A/(IS)).







Koftgari talwar

Rajasthan, 17th–18th century

Sword: 37 $\frac{5}{8}$ in. (95.5 cm.) long

In scabbard: 37 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (95.9 cm.) long

Provenance:

The collection of Dr. Leo S. Figiel (1918–2013).

Butterfield & Butterfield, San Francisco, 24 August 1998.

Published:

Leo S. Figiel, M.D., *On Damascus Steel*, New York, 1991, pp.100-1, no. IS5.

The present sword's hilt-form—with centrally swollen grip, rectangular langets, and near-flattened quillons—is often referred to as the Jodhpur style, popularized during the reign of Maharaja Jaswant Singh II. In a tribute to the sun god Surya, from whom many Rajputs claim descent, the disc pommel is engraved with a sunburst design. The remaining hilt surface is embellished with foliate *koftgari* designs, an Indian damascening technique that involves inlaying steel with gold.

The *talwar*'s wootz steel blade features an enlarged tip and two fullers along the flat edge running partway down the sword. In the center of the blade near the hilt is a stamped maker's mark consisting of dots, textured lines, and star designs. See a similar gold-embellished Jodhpur-style *talwar* with protruding point in the collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum (acc. As1997,30.9.a).



Jade-hilted and gilt khanjar

Mughal, 18th century

14 ⅛ in. (36 cm.) long

Daggers or *khanjars* and other arms were commonly carried by Mughal courtiers, as seen in the numerous portraits produced throughout the empire. Their blades were made of tempered steel, following the Persian tradition of hammering different steels together to form a marbled pattern. The hilts, often made from jade, served to counterbalance the blades as well as display a level of opulence through reliefs, jewels, and gilding. Such decorations frequently incorporated floral and foliate designs deriving from traditional Mughal motifs.

This *khanjar* comprises a typical 'pistol-grip' jade hilt with a curved double-edged wootz steel blade. Closely carved iris flowers and leaves decorate the lobed quillon block and pommel on either side, spreading over the medial brim of the hilt. Beautifully gilded foliate designs adorn the base of the blade, which displays a central ridge and rich marbling throughout.

For another delicately carved jade-hilted Mughal dagger with gilt blade designs, see the collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum (acc. 721&A-1889).



Jade-hilted and jeweled khanjar

Mughal, 18th–19th century

15 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (40.2 cm.) long

The present *khanjar* features a pale green jade hilt of ‘pistol-grip’ form, exquisitely detailed with emerald and ruby stones mounted in gilt settings arranged into foliate designs. The double-edged straight steel blade exhibits a wootz fuller with carved arabesques at either end and the gilded inscription ‘*ya Ali*’ (‘Oh Ali’) at the base of the blade. Such lavish detailing exemplifies both the high level of artistry as well as the extravagance that the Mughal Empire was renowned for.

A similarly decorated jade-hilted Mughal dagger can be found in the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s collection (acc. 36.25.658), which displays the same method of inlaying stones into a gilt-foliate design.



Painted saddle

Tibet, 15th–17th century

Gilt and varnished wood and leather, with gilt-iron frames

24 x 14 in. (61 x 35.6 cm.)

Published:

Himalayan Art Resources (himalayanart.org), item no. 7504.

The present saddle's wooden frame, or saddletree, is richly decorated with gilded and varnished leather panels on the arched front plate (pommel) and rear plate (cantle). The sideboards are equipped with end-board extensions that adjoin the leather varnished panels which are strengthened with iron frames adorned with gold and silver foliate scrollwork. Both pommel and cantle are decorated with dense scrolling foliage with repeated lotus blooms on the top register, and a wish-fulfilling jewel on a lotus base flanked by a pair of *makara* dragons on the lower. On both panels, the two registers are separated by a solid gold line on a raised central rib—the pommel, however, also includes a third, lower register, separated by a gilt-iron arch and decorated again with scrolling lotus blooms.

This saddle's floral arrangements can be compared to a 17th-century Tibetan wooden box from a private collection that is illustrated in *Wooden Wonders: Tibetan Furniture in Secular and Religious Life* (Kamansky, 2004, p.64, cat. no.241), as well as to those published in *Warriors of the Himalayas: Rediscovering the Arms and Armour of Tibet* (La Rocca, 2006, P.105, cat. no. 30). The latter exhibits the same lacquer-like effect, formed by layers of pigmented shellac followed by the gold leaf designs, another layer of shellac, and a final coat of tung oil glaze.



Vajradhara

Tibet, 15th century

Gilt-bronze

9 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (24.8 cm.) high

Provenance:

The collection of Holger Rosell (1917–2009), Stockholm.

The collection of the National Museum Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde, Stockholm.

Uppsala Auktionskammare, 5 December 2014, lot 1001.

Published:

Himalayan Art Resources (himalayanart.org), item no. 8375.

The present figure represents the primordial buddha Vajradhara. His hands—crossed in front of his heart in *vajrahumkara mudra* (the gesture of the ‘adamantine sound’) holding a *vajra/dorje* and *ghanta/drilbu* (bell)—make him easily recognizable. His elaborate ornaments identify him as a symbolic buddha in *bodhisattva* appearance.

This lustrous figure of Vajradhara is finely sculpted on a double-lotus base, clad in a *dhoti* with a shawl draped over his shoulders, flowing down symmetrically on either side of his torso to rest on his seat. An *urna* of inset turquoise sits below his five-leaf tiara behind which his hair is pulled into a neat pile surmounted by a half *vajra*. The complexity of the woven knots within his chignon is revealed from the backside of the sculpture, as is the careful execution of each element, despite the fact that these facets are frequently hidden.

The sculpture is embellished with small turquoise and ruby or garnet cabochons set in bezels to accentuate his crown, necklace, armbands, and belt—a style of inlay more common among Nepalese bronzes than Tibetan ones. However, the square face, the straight slope of the buddha’s nose in profile, the exclusion of a *garuda* element from the crown, and the festooned design of Vajradhara’s prominent necklace point to a Tibetan origin.



Vajravarahi

Nepal, circa 1800

Painted wood

21 in. (53.3 cm.) high

Provenance:

The collection of Philip Goldman, London.

Hayward Gallery, London.

Exhibited:

Tantra, Hayward Gallery, London, Art Council of Great Britain, 30 September–7 November 1971.

Published:

P. Rawson, *Tantra: Hayward Gallery*, London, 1971, p. 31, no. 115.

Himalayan Art Resources (himalayanart.org), item no. 7547.

The present sculpture depicts Vajravarahi, a prominent female deity in tantric Buddhism and consort of Chakrasamvara. Although she is usually shown accompanying or embracing him as his other half, Vajravarahi alone is often considered to be a godly representation of the combined wisdom held by all buddhas. One of Vajravarahi's eminent identifying features is the sow head, or *varahi*, emerging from behind her proper right ear. Tibetan Buddhists have symbolically used the sow to represent ignorance within their practices and the attached head implies the defeat of the beast, reinforcing Vajravarahi's overarching wisdom and general triumph over ignorance.

Another one of Vajravarahi's identifying features is her distinct pose, which appears as though she is frozen in movement, with her proper right leg bent towards her proper left thigh—a position that is referred to as *ardhaparyanka*. Beneath her lies a corpse, a Buddhist representation of the ultimate evil that has been conquered by Vajravarahi's immense power. In addition to her decorated body and billowing drapery, Vajravarahi proudly wears an intricate headpiece with

the heads of five humans. She also wears a large garland of severed heads that hangs around her dancing figure. In her raised proper right hand she holds a knife that is thought to be used to cut out irrelevant worldly concepts and leave only an acute awareness or *jnana*. Her proper left hand holds a small cup, usually a skull, that is said to be filled with blood or the scrambled ideas of humans. The present sculpture's intense and violent imagery further emphasizes Vajravarahi's vigor and power as she symbolically defeats ignorance, the fear of death, and other earthly or mundane views.

For another depiction of Vajravarahi, see Himalayan Art Resources, item no. 34057. This Vajrayogini (Vajravarahi's form without the sow head) also displays the deity's standard iconography and pose as well as similar billowing drapery.



Buddha head

Gandhara, 4th century

Gray schist

17 ⅜ in. (44 cm.) high

Provenance:

The collection of Dr. Ehsan Yarshater, Professor of Iranian Studies at Columbia University.
Examination TR #298.1-.9.2000, object no. A2355, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, April 2000.

Published:

Himalayan Art Resources (himalayanart.org), item no. 7503.

Hailing from the ancient region of Gandhara, modern-day Pakistan, the present Buddha head features strong Hellenistic influences characteristic of the period. His straight nose, which merges seamlessly into his curving brows, and the delicate pout of his bow-shaped lips are particularly reminiscent of Greek sculpture. More traditional Buddhist influences can be seen on his broad forehead which is offset by a small circular *urna*—one of the thirty-two signs of the Buddha—which at one point would have held a precious stone. According to Buddhist texts, Buddha's serene expression, with eyes half closed, is suggestive of meditation and introversion. His ears hang distended from the weight of heavy earrings—remnants of his royal upbringing as Prince Siddhartha before he started on his path to enlightenment.

The sculpture is made of schist, a widely used material in the Gandharan period which allows for detailed carving, as exemplified by the deep definition of the hair which undulates in symmetrical waves from his center part, framing his face with a widow's peak. Atop his head is a cranial bump called an *ushnisha*, covered with tight curls that curve in the direction of the sun. While much of Gandharan sculpture, in the style of Hellenistic naturalism, instead represents the *ushnisha* as a topknot, it is notable that the present sculpture retains a more traditional representation of the *ushnisha*.

Compare to another Buddha head published by Pratapaditya Pal in *The Sensuous Immortals: A Selection of Sculptures from the Pan-Asian Collection*, Los Angeles, 1978, p. 28, no. 7. While the present sculpture is considerably less Hellenistic, both are of exceptional size. See also a stylistically similar Buddha head at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (acc. 13.96.4) which exhibits the same stylized wave-like hair and subtle bow of the lips.



Indian clay figures

Attributed to Jadunath Pal

Krishnanagar, 19th century

Clay, hair, cloth

11 ¼ in. (28.6 cm.) high and under

Krishnanagar, a province of Bengal, has a long history of clay modeling which began in the mid-18th century when Maharaja Krishnachandra Roy (r. 1728–1783) established potteries in the region in order to create religious idols (Chose, 44–45). While clay figurines were traditionally limited to figures of deities from the Hindu pantheon, the Maharaja's introduction of the Hindu practice of *Barwari Puja* (community worship) created a large and diverse clientele for clay modeling. Clay scenes made for group worship began including figures of human attendants that served the clay gods. These human figures soon became popular on their own, encouraged by the Western demand for realistic representations of the people, plants, and animals of India (Chatterjee, 208).

The practice reached its zenith in the late 19th century, when such figurines were considered national treasures and were often sent to international exhibitions to represent India. In particular, the Pal family garnered much renown for their exceptional skill in the craft, the most famous of whom was Jadunath Pal (1821–1920). An article written for the Glasgow International Exhibition in 1888 recounts that:

The figures made by [the Pal family] have acquired great celebrity, and they have repeatedly gained medals and certificates in most of the International Exhibitions held since 1851. There is considerable delicacy and fineness in their work; the figures are instinct [sic] with life and expression, and their pose and action are excellent.

(Mukharji, 59)

The writer continues that Jadunath Pal in particular had “no equal in India in this kind of work” (Mukharji, 63).

The present set, representing a variety of Indian castes, is attributed to Jadunath Pal, who often included the contributions of specialist tradesmen in his work—the clothing was made not by modelers, but by actual tailors, and if a figure was accessorized with a basket or a necklace, they often came directly from the professionals themselves, giving the figures an exceptional realism. While many of the figures are missing the implements of their trade that would once have distinguished them from one another, the delicate positioning of their bodies and their animated appearance nevertheless bring them to life. Not only were these figures once outfitted with real clothing and tools, but also with human hair. While this novel feature is now missing on a majority of the figures, the largest of the group—an elderly man with a wonderfully articulated stomach and a string of beads around his neck—still retains his original patch of hair.

See a similar group by Jadunath Pal which was exhibited at the Melbourne International Exhibition in 1880 and gifted to the National Gallery of Victoria by the India Commission of the Melbourne International Exhibition (acc. ST 40409-40414).

References:

- Chatterjee, S., *People of Clay: Portrait Objects in the Peabody Essex Museum*, Museum History Journal, 2013.
- Chose, B., *Traditional Arts and Crafts of West Bengal: a sociological survey*, Papyrus, Calcutta, 1981.
- Mukharji, T. N., *Art Manufactures of India: specially compiled for the Glasgow International Exhibition*, Superintendent of Government Printing, Calcutta, 1888.



Illustration of a bladesmith

Attributed to the circle of Ghulam 'Ali Khan (active 1817–1855)

Company School, possibly Delhi, 19th century

Opaque watercolor on paper

Image: 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (12.1 x 10.8 cm.)

Folio: 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (27.3 x 22.2 cm.)

Bare-chested and wearing a *topi*—a prayer cap often worn by members of the Muslim faith—a scabbard maker is depicted against a stark background. Appearing in deep concentration, his eyes squint over a *pince-nez* that rests low on his nose. Surrounded by tools of his trade, he holds a large file in his right hand as he prepares to work on the *talwar* that rests on his knee. A large box with a tassel closure lies behind him near a stone block used to shape his blades.

This painting comes from a series depicting figures of various castes and professions—a common theme within the Company School, which catered to the growing European fascination with Indian customs and culture. The present figure was likely drawn by an artist from the circle of Ghulam 'Ali Khan of Delhi, which consisted of some of the most accomplished and versatile artists of the Company School.

Compare to another folio attributed to the circle of Ghulam 'Ali Khan from the famed Fraser Album, commissioned by William Fraser (1784–1835) and his brother James Baillie Fraser (1783–1856) in 1815–1819 (Art Institute of Chicago, acc. 1981-248). Both images are set against an off-white backdrop that brings focus to the figures and their activities, and share a subtle naturalism and a soft stippling of form. The present painting, however, has been re-pasted into a different album, which includes illustrations of various qualities from a variety of schools, ranging from the Pahari Hills to the Delhi-Agra region. Each folio includes an inscription in *Takri* below. See a collection of four folios from the same set sold at Christie's, 25 October 2016, lot 15.



ਸਿਆਨਬੰਨਾਉਨੇਬਾਰਾਦੇਹਾ)

ਰਚਤ ਸਿਆਨਹਮੇਜਸੇਸੁਨੀਏਕ੍ਰਿਪਾਨਿਧਾਨਾ ਸਕਲਕਾਮਕੇਬੀਰ
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 ਲਤਕਛੂਰਹਤ ਹਮੇਸ ਅਜੀਹਾਥਨਮੇਚਾਂਮਹੈ ॥ ਕਰੀਏਯੋਤਿਯਾਰਬਡੀ
 ਬਾਰਮੇਨਿਹਾਰਤੇਗਾਮਾਠੇਜਾਂਮਹੁਮੇਨਾਹਪਾਈਏਆਰਾਮਹੈ ॥ ਕੋਨਪੇਸੁ
 ਨਾਮੇਅਜੀਅਪਨੇਜਿਯਾਕੀਬਾਤਕਹੀਤਕੁਟਿਬਤੰਗਪਾਸਨਾਛਦਾਮਹੈ ॥੪॥
 ਈਏਕਲੇਸਕਬੀਨੇਕਨਮਰਾਂਮਮਿਲੇਸਭਤੇਗੁਲਾਮਯਹਮਿਜਾਂਨਨਕੋਕਾਂ
 ਮਹੈ ॥੨॥ ਦੇਹਾ ਕਰਤ ਸਿਆਨਕੇਕਾਮਹੈਕਬਹੁਨੀਮਲਤਅਰਾਂਮਾਕੇਤੋਖਰੇ
 ਬਨਾਈਏਪਾਬਤਥੇਰੋਦਾਮਾ ॥੩॥

A great Indian fruit bat (flying fox)

Attributed to the circle of Ghulam 'Ali Khan (active 1817–1855)

Company School, Calcutta, late 18th–early 19th century

Watercolor on Whatman paper

8 ¼ x 13 ⅜ in. (20.8 x 34 cm.)

Provenance:

The collection of William Lipton (d. 2018).

The Company School of Indian painting came into being as the officers of the British East India Company and their families expanded control in India and became patrons of the arts. As a result, the 18th and 19th centuries saw Indian artists (many of which were trained in the Mughal tradition) adapt their style to suit European palettes, particularly in their interest in science and discovery. This led to the production of stunning images of local flora and fauna which were often compiled into albums by their patrons and taken back to Europe. Within the so-called Company School, there developed two famed artistic circles—the circle of Bhawani Das and the circle of Ghulam 'Ali Khan—which produced the Impey Album and the Fraser album, respectively. These two albums are largely considered to be the finest examples of Company School paintings ever produced.

Here, the artist has chosen the great Indian fruit bat (*Pteropus giganteus*) as his subject in this fine and dramatic study. The animal is rendered naturalistically, the artist paying exceptional attention to detail, most notably in the soft fur, almost-human eyes, and curling claws. In regards to another Company School drawing of the same subject, Stuart Cary Welch points out that “[it] looks far too disturbing to be a strict fruitarian. Its eerie extra claws, useful for holding bananas or mangoes, evoke Gothic horror tales.” Such an evocative subject, which was drawn from life, surely sparked the fascination of this painting’s European patron, who likely wrote the English inscription in the lower right corner, signed JB, recording the subject’s impressive size, “3 feet 9 inches from wing to wing.”

There are three other known Company School illustrations of fruit bats, all of which are attributed to Bhawani Das, who produced extensive natural history studies for Sir Elijah Impey, Chief Justice of Bengal (1774–1782), and his wife, Lady Mary (see William Dalrymple, *Forgotten Masters, Indian Painting for the East India Company*, London, 2020, p.69–71, figs. 32–34). While the present image is executed on European Whatman paper, as were many other known Impey Album pages with similar illustrations, it is drawn on a much smaller scale, and more closely resembles illustrations produced by the circle of Ghulam 'Ali Khan. See a folio from the Fraser Album at the British Museum depicting eight Sikh courtiers and servants of the Raja Patiala (acc. 1988,1020,0.1). While quite different in subject, the two images share the softly stippled layering of colors, rounded forms, and subtle naturalism that characterized paintings produced by the circle of Ghulam 'Ali Khan. While the present image is almost certainly not from the Fraser Album, which consisted majorly of figure drawings and costume studies, it was likely produced by the same group of artists for another patron.







Three studies of quail

Company School, Lucknow, circa 1800

Watercolor on watermarked paper

6 in. (15.2 cm.) diam. (each, sight)

Frame: 26 ½ x 12 ¼ in. (67.5 x 31 cm.)

Provenance:

The collection of Major James Nathaniel Rind.

Private UK collection.

In 1775, Nawab Asaf ud-Daula of Oudh moved the capital of the northern state from Faizabad back to Lucknow. Thereafter, the city experienced rapid growth and thriving industry; with its elegant gardens, sculptures, and fountains as well as exquisite new palaces and mosques, Lucknow flourished well into the 19th century and provided the perfect environment for Company School painting to prosper.

A number of British artists visited the burgeoning city at the end of the 18th century, including Thomas and William Daniell, Ozias Humphry, and Johann Zoffany. There were also several European officials posted in Lucknow who were avid patrons of Indian artists. Thus, Indian artists were exposed first-hand to examples of British and European art from which they drew inspiration, ultimately leading to a plethora of paintings produced in the Company School style.

These three studies of quail provide very fine examples of the close examination and naturalistic rendering that Company School artists were known for. Each bird displays an exceptional attention to detail, down to the precision of each feather's barbs and the scaly texture of their feet. The rich brown, warm orange, and pale yellow hues in contrast to the white speckled details of the feathers provide a precise and wonderful testament to the natural beauty of Indian wildlife, one of the main focuses of Company School painting. Compare the present works to a Company School painting of a hooded merganser from circa 1800 at the National Gallery of Victoria (acc. 2011.25). Note the similarities in the meticulous rendering of each individual feather as well as the treatment of the landscape in all four paintings—tufts of grass spurting from shadowed patches—which is typical of late-18th-century Lucknow painting.



Three folios of flora and fauna from the Louisa Parlby Album Company School, Murshidabad, circa 1795–1803

Watercolor on paper

Image: 10 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 14 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (26.4 x 36.7 cm.) (each)

Folio: 19 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 30 in. (50 x 76.4 cm.) (each)

These three illustrations come from the Parlby Album, assembled by Louisa Parlby (wife of Colonel James Parlby) in Bengal during the late 18th–early 19th century. The album comprises a collection of architectural and natural history watercolor paintings, including topographical scenes, local festivals, Palladian mansions, Indian palaces, and studies of flora and fauna such as the present. These selections thus reflect the interests of British collectors in India and offer insight into their interaction with Indian artists. Such albums were fashionable at the time, with the most famous example being the very fine album produced for Lady Impey between 1777 and 1783.

Contact with the British was particularly strong in Murshidabad, where the center of Company School painting in Eastern and Upper India bloomed at the end of the 18th century. Local artists recognized the shift in patronage from the old Indian aristocracy to the new British officers and traders, and although classical miniature themes persisted, the artists also developed new subjects to appeal to the European market. Furthermore, local artists modified their style to satisfy the new class of patrons by adjusting their medium and color range. While gouache and cold colors with a profuse use of white had been previously favored in Murshidabad, they noticed the British preferred watercolor and more somber shades. Thus, by the turn of the century, Company School artists had gradually adapted a style characterized by a greater use of sepia tones with touches of brighter color.

This emerging style is captured in the present three album pages, particularly in the coloring of the bird studies, which are dominated by dull browns and neutral tones with the contrasting vivid blue feathers of the leftmost figures. Compare to another turn-of-the-century Company School study of a bird in the collection of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (acc. M.85.222.1), which the artist (Abil Khan) illustrated perched on a branch, similar to the present artwork. For another depiction of multiple adjacent botanical studies, see the Metropolitan Museum of Art (acc. 2007.289).



Six botanical paintings of fruit

Company School, 19th century

Opaque watercolor on paper

12 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 7 $\frac{5}{8}$ in. (32 x 19.4 cm.) (each)

When British men and women went to India, they were fascinated by the new environment and determined to sketch the novel subjects. They soon found that such subjects could be depicted much more accurately by the local artists who were familiar with them and also eager to receive new patronage. While Indian artists transformed their style to execute these commissions, they also began to produce standard sets of paintings they thought would appeal to the British, exhibiting them around British stations or selling them to travelers at well-known resting spots along rivers.

The present six paintings reflect the European concern with capturing the beautiful reality of nature and display the careful observation that characterized Company School painting in its heyday. The adjustments local artists made to their style around the turn of the century are apparent in the use of muted colors in place of brilliant hues, as well as the use of shading and perspective in the European manner. See a similar example of a Company School botanical study at the British Museum (acc. 1999,0203,0.27). Note the similarities in the display of the plant next to the individual components of its anatomy, namely the cross section of the fruit, the seed, and the flower.



Tomb of Akbar the Great

Company School, circa 1800

Opaque watercolor on paper

9 ½ x 11 in. (24.1 x 27.9 cm.)

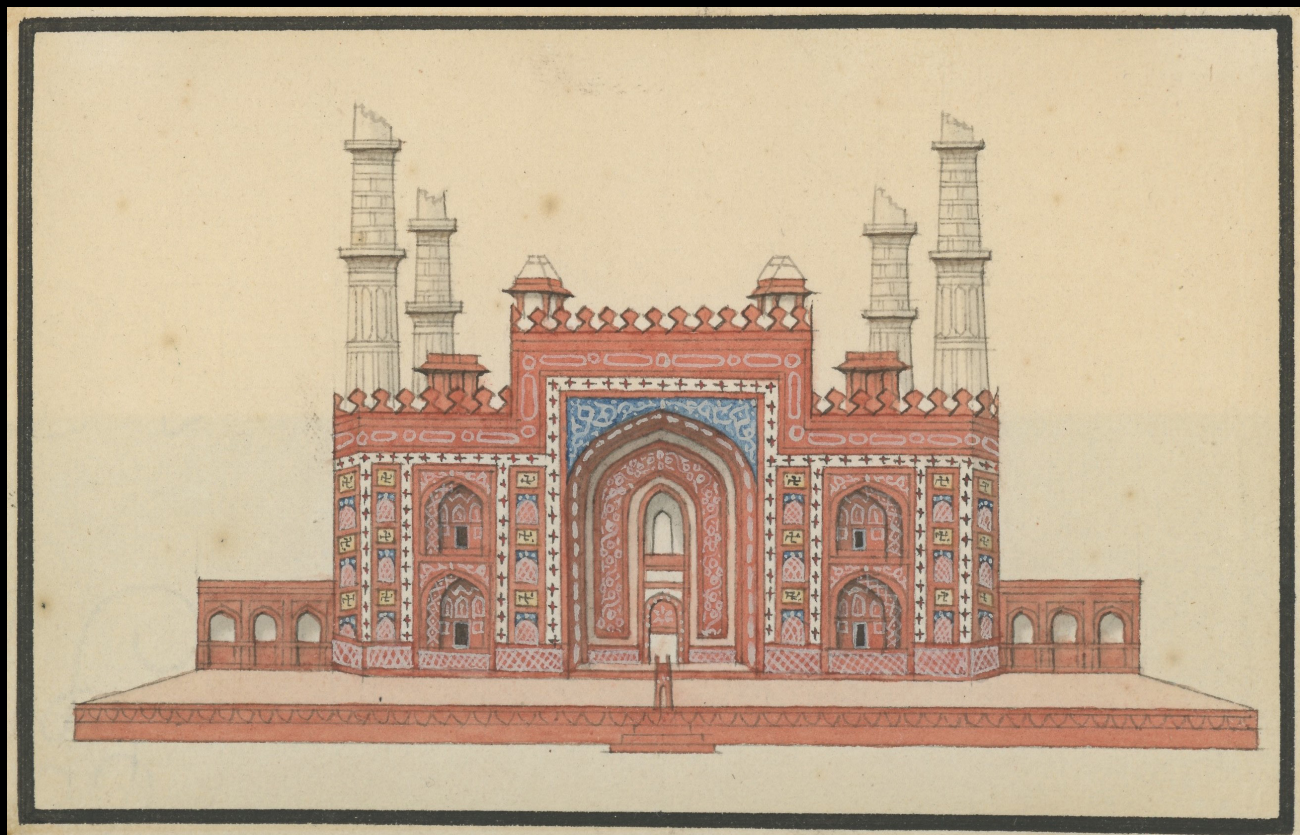
Provenance:

The collection of the late Mary L. Hill, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

As Europeans continued to colonize India, they remained dazzled by the grandeur of the historical architecture throughout the country. As a result, the Company School produced countless architectural studies of the extravagant palaces and tombs of rulers past. Captain G.C. Mundy, who served as a lieutenant in the British army in the 19th century, gives a first-hand account of these splendors:

*We have here domes, minarets, fanciful
architecture and a costume above all flaunting
in color, set off with weapons and formed, from
the easy flow of its drapery, to adorn beauty and
disguise deformity... Every hut, equipage, utensil
and beast of India is picturesque.*

Here, the illustration captures the picturesque beauty of the tomb of Akbar the Great near Agra. While the monument is still standing today, Company School architectural illustrations provide important records of buildings that have been destroyed, such as parts of the Delhi Palace complex. For another Company School watercolor of Akbar's tomb from the same vantage point, see the British Museum (acc. 1945,1013,0.9.28).



Two architectural drawings of the tombs of Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal

Company School, North India, possibly Delhi, late 19th century

Opaque watercolor on paper

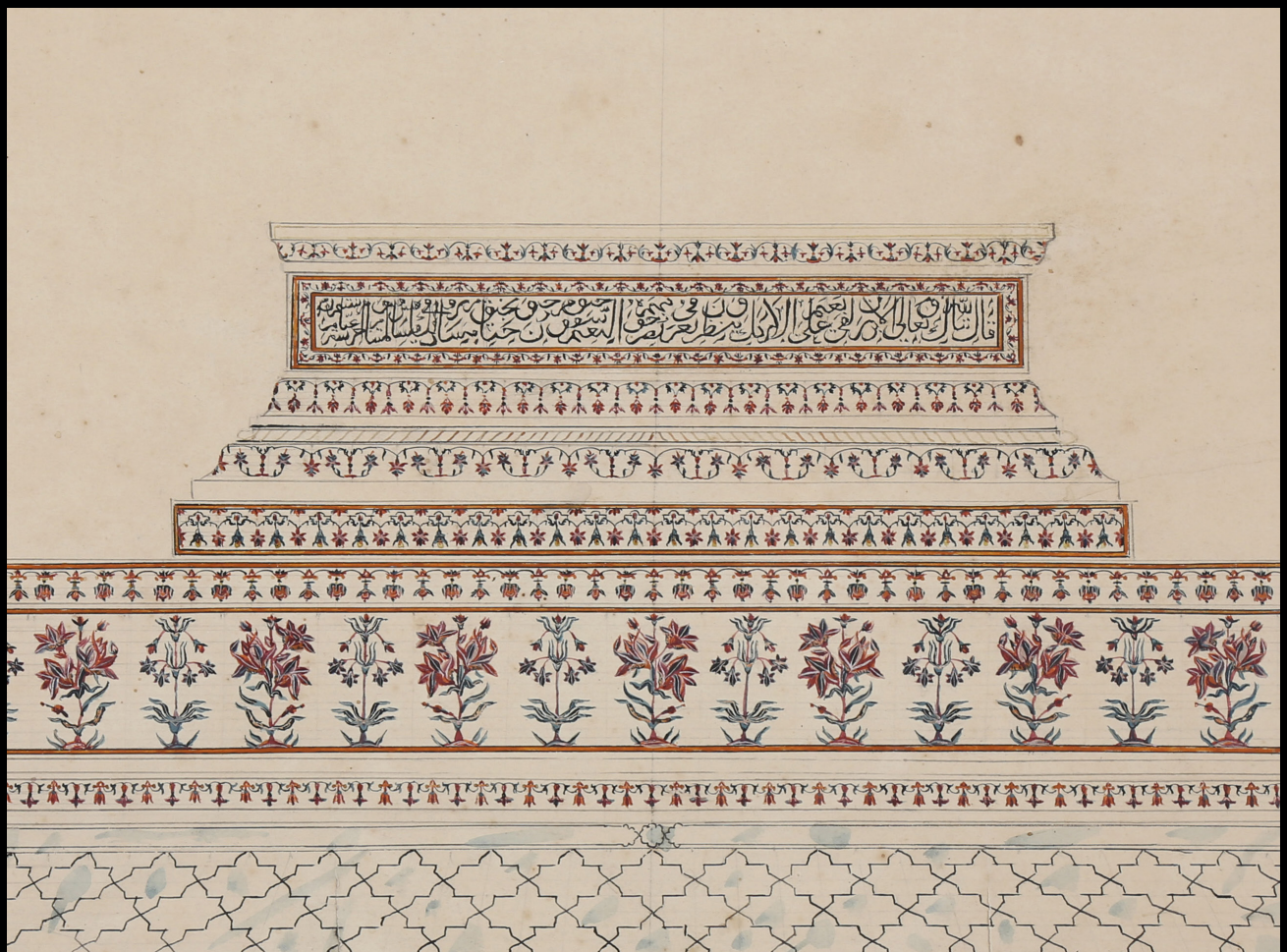
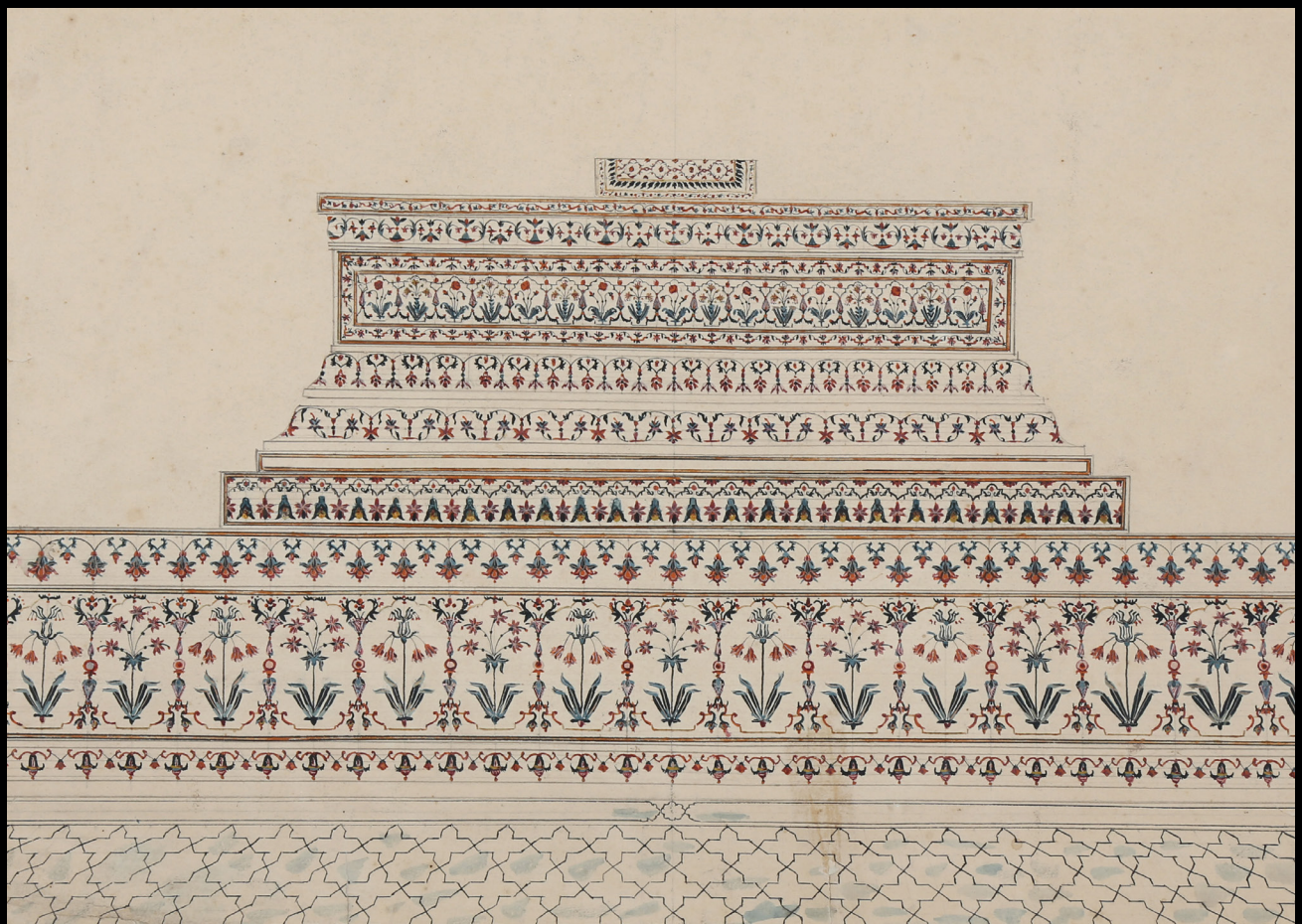
Shah Jahan folio: 9 ½ x 13 ¾ in. (24.1 x 34.9 cm.)

Mumtaz Mahal folio: 9 x 13 ⅓ in. (22.9 x 33.9 cm.)

Son of Jahangir and grandson of Akbar the Great, emperor Shah Jahan (1592–1666) was responsible for shepherding in the golden age of the Mughal Empire. Under him, arts and literature flourished and a stunning architectural style was established, culminating in the erection of the legendary Taj Mahal. Located in Agra, the seat of Mughal rule, the Taj was intended to serve as a tomb for Shah Jahan's deceased wife. He himself was buried with her upon his death.

The first folio, identifiable by the 'T' marked at the bottom left of the page, depicts Shah Jahan's tomb in the Taj Mahal complex, which appears decorated with traditional Islamic floral and geometric motifs. The second folio depicts the tomb of Mumtaz Mahal at the Taj Mahal complex. While her tomb is also carefully adorned with floral motifs, it can be differentiated from Shah Jahan's by the Quranic inscription near the top. The inscription was created using *pietra dura*—a decorative mosaic technique that involves cutting and fitting stones to create detailed designs—and reads the ninety names of God, including "O' Noble, O' Magnificent, O' Eternal."

These drawings served as a form of architectural documentation for European audiences. The correspondence between the British and Indian artists helped to advocate for the preservation and maintenance of Mughal monuments and simultaneously introduced the West to the architectural marvels of India. For another set of similar Company School architectural drawings depicting Mumtaz's tomb and the interior of the Taj Mahal, see the collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum (acc. IS.252-1961).



A. Interior of I'timad ad-Daulah's tomb

Company School, 19th century

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

6 ½ x 9 in. (16.5 x 22.9 cm.)

Watermark on paper reads: C Wilmot 1825

Provenance:

The collection of Kenneth Jay Lane.

B. China Building opposite Agra

Company School, 19th century

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

7 ¼ x 8 ½ in. (18.4 x 21.6 cm.)

Watermark on paper reads: J Green & Son 1834

Provenance:

The collection of Kenneth Jay Lane.

C. Dome at the tomb of Akbar

Company School, 19th century

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

7 x 9 ½ in. (17.8 x 24.1 cm.)

Provenance:

The collection of Kenneth Jay Lane.

Company School paintings were generally created by Indian artists to document the country for foreigners. The painting style was often edited to appeal to Western sensibilities, resulting in lovely illustrations of architecture, botanicals, animals, and laborers at their daily jobs. These paintings would then travel back to Europe or the Americas as a way to show those at home what was seen and experienced in the distant East.

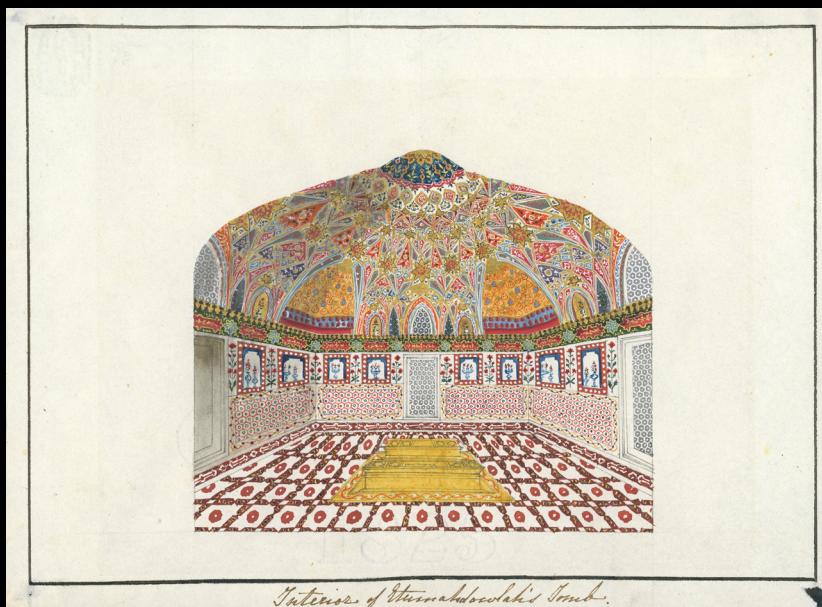
Each of these architectural watercolors depicts a place in the Mughal capital of Agra, where the Taj Mahal is located. As captioned by the artist, the 'China Building Opposite Agra' refers to Chini Ka Raza—a tomb and funerary monument for the scholar Allama Afzal Khan Mullah, who served as the prime minister to Emperor Shah Jahan. This building was once one of the finest examples of glazed tile work from the period, coated with *chini* tiles, but has since fallen into disrepair from time and harsh weather.

Located nearby, the Tomb of Itimad-ud-Daulah is a popular monument designed by Emperor Jahangir's wife, Nur Jahan, for her father Mirza Ghiyas-ud-din, later called Itmad-ud-Daulah (meaning 'Pillar of the State') for his service as treasurer under Akbar. It has earned the nickname of 'Baby Taj' as it was the first tomb built entirely from white marble in India and is said to have inspired the Taj Mahal.

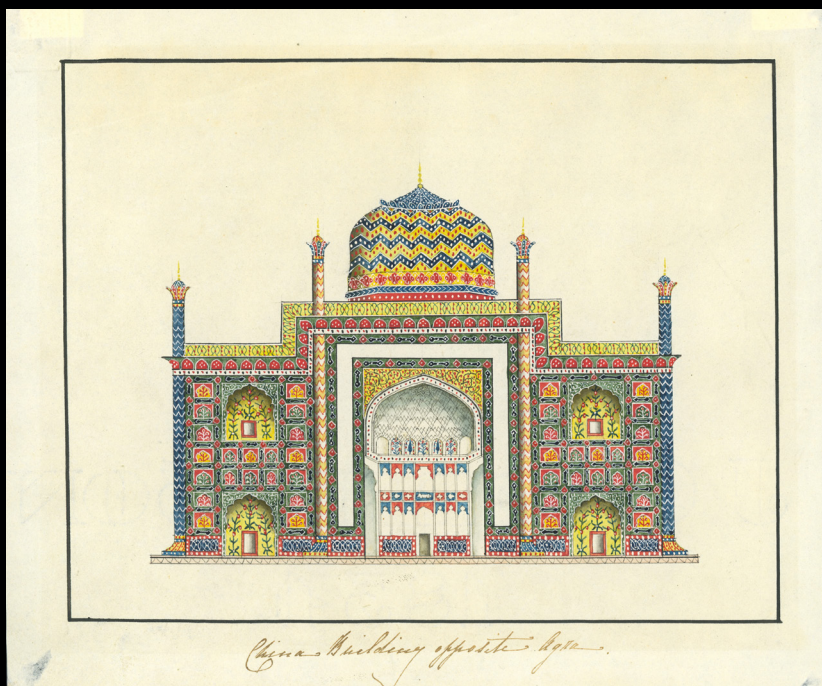
Toward the outskirts of Agra, in a neighborhood known as Sikandra, is the Tomb of Akbar. Although construction was completed under Jahangir, Akbar chose the location himself, also designing the gardens and tomb before his death. The facade uniquely faces the rising sun rather than Mecca.

Each of these structures is a notable site of Mughal architecture and enterprise, standing today as a reminder of the former kingdom's glory and creativity.

A.



B.



C.



Illustration to a Ragamala series: Todi Ragini

Provincial Mughal, 18th century

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 7 1/8 x 4 7/8 in. (18.1 x 12.4 cm.)

Folio: 13 x 10 in. (33 x 25.4 cm.)

Provenance:

Private British collection.

Christie's South Kensington, 1 October 2012, lot 97.

Ragas are melodies that serve as templates for improvisation within the ancient classification system of Indian music. While each melody has a certain structure, there are infinite songs that can be produced within each mold. *Ragamala* (or 'Garland of Melody') paintings aim to capture each melody's mood or sentiment into visual forms, which are categorized into thirty-six male and female personifications—*ragas* and *raginis*, respectively. Often focused around 'love in union' and 'love in separation,' each painting is meant to evoke the feeling or color of the melody rather than a specific narrative, and they are often associated with particular seasons, regions, and times of day.

The present painting depicts Todi Ragini, which is believed to be a song sung by village girls while guarding the ripening fields against deer. The melody is said to enchant the deer, preventing them from feeding on the village crops (Ebeling, 60). Here, Todi Ragini is depicted as a lonely *nayika* who plays her veena in the forest, surrounded by deer who listen to her song. Expressing the tender longing of separated lovers, the deer that flock to her serve to underscore the woman's isolation as she plays her somber tune. The flowing green grass, blooming lotus flowers, and brilliant golden sky are meant to evoke the mood of a spring morning, "as the sun's rays have lit the earth at dawn," at which time the Todi Ragini is meant to be played. Compare to another Todi Ragini folio circa 1725 at the Philadelphia Museum of Art (acc. 1977-12-1).

References:

Ebeling, Klaus, *Ragamala Painting*, New Delhi, 1973.

येनी



Illustration to a Ragamala series: Todi Ragini

Mughal, 18th century

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 5 1/8 x 3 in. (13 x 7.6 cm.)

Folio: 6 1/4 x 4 1/8 in. (15.9 x 10.5 cm.)

Provenance:

Private Florida collection, since 1992.

Standing beneath the pink blossoms of a small sapling, a lone *nayika* wanders an open glade. The vast empty landscape emphasizes the woman's loneliness, the only audience for her longing tune being a blackbuck deer—horns delicately embellished with gold and a jeweled necklace around its outstretched neck—who serves as a stand-in for her absent lover. A cool white sun peeks through the morning haze, bringing a tinge of gold into the slowly brightening sky—the flat layers of metallic and cool colors evoking the feeling of a spring morning. The iconography is immediately recognizable as that of Todi Ragini, which recalls the wistful mood of love in separation.

See another folio of Todi Ragini at the Royal Collection Trust (acc. RCIN 1005127), which while stylistically quite different, shares a similar composition to the present painting, characterized by a scarce background and the trifecta of *nayika*, deer, and tree.



Illustration to a Ragamala series: Gujar Ragini

Mughal, 18th century

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 5 ¼ x 3 ⅛ in. (13.3 x 7.9 cm.)

Folio: 7 ¼ x 4 ¾ in. (17.8 x 10.2 cm.)

Provenance:

Private Florida collection, since 1992.

Clutching at a handful of pink roses, a beautiful *nayika* listens as her companion plays the veena. The musician's hair is adorned with a long white feather surmounted by a white jewel that glistens like the moonlight off of the small pond at their feet. Long-necked birds bathe and stretch their wings as they too enjoy the beautiful melody. The darkness of the night overwhelms them, obscuring the surrounding garden and the shadowed outline of a lingam shrine. In the background, the faint glow of the moon fights to break through the undulating storm clouds that linger over the distant spires of a city.

The present scene depicts Gujar Ragini, a *ragamala* that has been described as a sixteen-year-old girl, adorned with jewels like moonbeams, who picks flowers and plays the veena as she waits for her lover to meet her in embrace. Gujar Ragini, however, lacks a consistent iconography, and has also been known to depict a woman playing the veena to peacocks or even Krishna seducing women at the water well. Thus, making an identification is dubious without translation of the *nasta'liq* inscriptions in the upper right corner and lower register. This is especially true considering this painting's similarity to a rare iteration of the Sarang Ragini particular to Hyderabad, two of which are published in Klaus Ebeling's *Ragamala Paintings* (1973, cat. 80, p. 195 and cat. 242 p. 256). Whether the present *ragamala* is that of Gujar or Sarang Ragini, or even something entirely different, it is nevertheless a charming image.



Angels bring food to Ibrahim Adham at dawn

Hyderabad, circa 1750–1775

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Calligraphy panel on verso

Image: 10 x 7 in. (25.4 x 17.8 cm.)

Folio: 18 3/8 x 14 in. (46.6 x 35.6 cm.)

Provenance:

Sotheby's London, 14 February 1987, lot 16.

Private collection, Derbyshire, 1987-2010.

Exhibited:

Worlds Beyond: Death and the Afterlife in Art.

Cartwright Hall, Bradford, December–February 1993.

Castle Museum, Nottingham, March–April 1994.

Walsall City Art Gallery, May–June 1994.

Sheltered by a rocky outcropping and the protective curve of a tree bough, a wandering dervish is depicted leaning against a *fakir's* crutch in deep sleep. A small fire keeps him warm as he slumbers in only a *dhoti* and a patchwork dervish cloak which is draped over his shoulders—its patches rendered in painstaking detail, each bearing its own unique pattern. Two angels carrying covered food stand before him, sumptuously dressed in golden textiles and strings of pearls that complement the brilliant orange and turquoise of their wings. Two more emerge from a copse of trees on the other side of a small pond teeming with life—waterfowl peck at the water's edge and swim together in pairs as white and orange fish navigate between the blooming lotus flowers. Another pond appears in the foreground, its zig-zagging edge lined with fanning sprays of grasses which frame the scene. The background, typical of the Deccan, reveals a rocky landscape with buildings perched on conical hills. Diminutive figures of dancing women and white cattle dot the landscape, illuminated by the rising sun.

The dervish is identified by a *nasta'liq* inscription which floats by his head in a small cloud-form: "Ibrahim Adham [God's] mercy be upon him." On the reverse is Persian prose text in *nasta'liq* describing the life of Ibrahim Adham, an eighth-century king of Balkh and prominent Sufi saint who, much like Gautama Buddha, realized that he could not find God whilst living the luxurious palace life. Renouncing his kingship, he became a wandering dervish and achieved a semi-

mythical status. The subject of this painting, frequently depicted in 18th-century Mughal India, illustrates a story in which angels bring Ibrahim food in his sleep—their assistance suggesting divine recognition of the virtue of the ascetic lifestyle. See another depiction of the same scene at the Royal Collection Trust (acc. RCIN 1005069.ah). In both images, the angels are depicted with vibrantly colored wings and wearing gold brocades as well as headdresses associated with Mughal women of Asian descent.



References:

Kühnel, E., "Mihr Tschand, ein unbekannter Mogulmaler," in *Berliner Museen*, 43, 1922.

Falk, T., and Archer, M., *Indian Miniatures in the India Office Library*, London, 1981.

Hurel, R., *Miniatures et Peintures Indiennes*, Paris, 2010.



Angels dance and fly

Pahari Hills, circa 1800

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 9 ¼ x 6 ¾ in. (23.5 x 17.1 cm.)

Folio: 11 ⅝ x 8 ⅞ in. (29.5 x 22.5 cm.)

The winged angel was introduced into Mughal art by Jesuit missionaries who first brought engravings from Antwerp to Mughal courts in 1580. These classical European forms were Mughalized and often transplanted into new contexts, adopting iconography more harmonious with existing Mughal art. These celestial beings eventually made their way into Indian art in the 18th century, when the decline of the Mughal Empire forced many Mughal artists to migrate to Pahari courts in search of new patronage, bringing with them techniques, skills, and devices of Mughal ateliers.

The angels in the present painting dance and fly within a rounded portal typical of paintings from the Pahari Hills. It is clear from their vibrant attire and fez hats that this painting is based on more Mughalized angel conventions, rather than directly from European models. While lacking its key figure, it is likely that this painting is based on a scene popular in Mughal courts during the 18th century in which angels bring the dervish Ibrahim Adham food as he sleeps. See two other depictions of angels at the San Diego Museum of Art, painted in Karnataka and Himachal Pradesh (acc. 1990.534 and 1990.1082, respectively). Both images exhibit a similar color palette to the present painting—the angels appearing with striking green wings and robed in orange, green, and pink, the latter also including the distinctive fez hats.



Vishnu and Lakshmi astride Garuda

Pahari Hills, 18th century

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 5 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 4 in. (14.3 x 10.2 cm.)

Folio: 9 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 6 $\frac{5}{8}$ in. (24.4 x 16.8 cm.)

Provenance:

The collection of Dr. and Mrs. Giraud V. and Carolyn Foster, acquired in India, 1956.

The present painting depicts Vishnu and Lakshmi seated astride his *vahana*, Garuda. The blue-skinned Vishnu holds one of his four attributes in each hand: a mace, a conch shell, a lotus flower, and a *chakra*. Lakshmi looks up at him in devotion, pulling him towards her with one hand on his shoulder—a subtle and romantic touch that Pahari artists were well-known for. Garuda supports the couple, grasping their feet and holding them steady. The assured hand and dreamlike lyricism give this image an exceptional ability to convey human emotions. The folio, which has been pasted onto a new backing, is inscribed in a different hand in the year Samvat 1840 (1783 A.D.), attributing the work to Ram Dyal.

See a painting of the same subject attributed to Sajnu, circa 1810–1820, currently at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (acc. 2019.144). The Met’s description of the scene can similarly be applied to the present painting:

It is a rare work in the genre of Pahari (Hill) schools in that it concerns itself not with narrating a scene from the epics or devotional literature, but celebrates a single deity, Vishnu, riding his magnificent avian vehicle Garuda. In this way, it singles itself out as a work not concerned with storytelling but rather with celebrating the beauty and grace of Lord Vishnu. As such, it can best be understood as a very personal work, destined for private worship in a household shrine-room.

The drawing on the verso of this painting has been identified as *Radha and Krishna’s Reconciliation*, and can be compared to another composition of the same scene from Kangra, circa 1790–1800, formerly in the Coomaraswamy Collection, now in the Cleveland Museum of Art (see Linda York Leach, *Indian Miniature Paintings and Drawings, The Cleveland Museum of Art Catalogue of Oriental Art, Part One*, Cleveland, 1986, no. 122). The drawing provides a fascinating look into the process of the famed Pahari ateliers. The crisp lines, drawn by skilled hands, are by no means the work of a ‘rough draft’—despite being uncolored, the image is not in fact unfinished. Functioning as an ‘artist drawing’ that would be kept in the studio as a reference, inscriptions throughout contain coloring instructions. The red inscription on the top right specifies that the background be painted red, while the inscription in the center of the window directs the artist to “paint the color of moonlight, showing the moon in the sky.” These directives helped to maintain consistency throughout the atelier’s works, which were usually executed by a number of different hands.





Lakshmi-Narayana enthroned

Kangra, circa 1800

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

8 ¼ x 8 ⅞ in. (21 x 20.7 cm.)

Provenance:

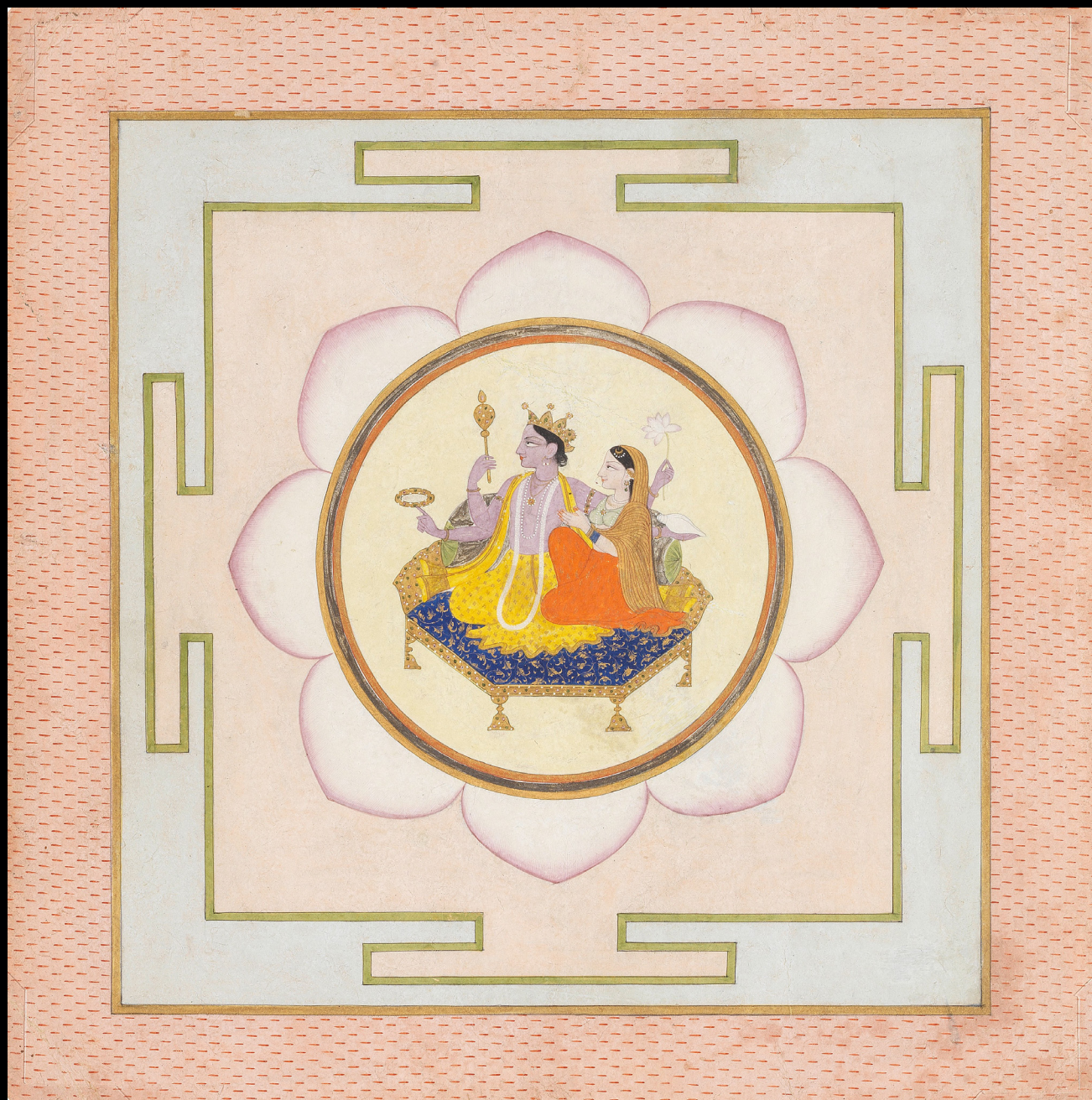
Hearst & Hearst, Boston, early 1980s.

Private Boston collection.

Vishnu the Preserver appears here in his Chaturbhuja (four-armed) form, enthroned beside his consort Lakshmi. The god's identity is revealed by his blue-toned skin and vibrant yellow *dhota* as well as the objects he carries in each of his four hands: a discus (*chakra*), mace (*gada*), conch (*shankha*), and lotus. Both deities are illustrated in an opulent manner—garbed in vibrant colors and lavish pearl, emerald, and gold accessories—which follows the typical convention for depicting Vishnu as a king and Lakshmi as the goddess of wealth and prosperity.

Perhaps most notable, however, is the placement of the divine couple within a *yantra*—a rare practice in Indian miniature painting. *Yantras* are tantric diagrams used in homes and temples to aid in meditation and can be of several types. The present painting displays a *pujayantra*, which is invoked in the worship of specific deities. Vishnu and Lakshmi are encircled within a border surrounded by eight lotus petals pointing in the cardinal and intermediate directions. *Yantras* often include lotus petals—a symbol of purity, transcendence, and fertility—in various numbers, but with eight being one of the most common. The lotus is then enclosed in a square with four gates—sacred doorways also pointing in the four cardinal directions—a standard convention in the representation of *yantras*.

The painting's verso is inscribed with a *nagari* couplet, the first line of which states that it is said that whoever chants Raghubir's name (an incarnation of Vishnu also known as Lord Ram) shall be absolved of their sins, remain happy, and not fear death. The second line expresses that Lakshmi-Narayana (Vishnu with Lakshmi) resides in the heart.



Vishnu reclining on Shesha

Pahari Hills, possibly Mandi, 19th century

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 4 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 7 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (11.1 x 18.1 cm.)

Folio: 5 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 8 $\frac{5}{8}$ in. (14.3 x 21.9 cm.)

Provenance:

The collection of Dr. and Mrs. Giraud V. and Carolyn Foster.

The present scene is described in the Mahabharata:

When there was but a single, dreadful ocean, and the moving and standing creation had perished, and all the creatures had come to an end... the blessed Vishnu, the everlasting source of all creatures, the eternal Person, slept solitarily on his ocean bed in the vast coil of the boundlessly puissant snake Shesha... While the God was sleeping, a lotus of the luster of the sun sprouted from his navel; and there, in that sun-like and moon-like lotus, Grandfather himself was born, Brahma, the guru of the world.

(Chapter 194, verse 10,
translated by Buitenen)

Shown here, the sleeping figure of Vishnu reclines against the king of serpents, Shesha, whose many heads loom protectively above him. With one arm resting loosely across his chest, and another supporting his head, the blue-skinned god appears completely at ease despite the vast tumult of the primordial ocean that surrounds him. His attributes—a *gada*, a *chakra*, and a lotus flower—are strewn carelessly beside him as Bhudevi, the earth goddess, massages his feet to aid in his

rest. The lotus, which rises from the muck into full bloom, has often been used in Hindu art as a symbol of transcendence. Here it becomes a sort of reversed umbilical cord, stemming from the navel of the creator to his offspring, Brahma, representing the birth of a new world. The fact that Vishnu creates the world in his sleep implies that everything we experience is merely Vishnu's dream (Cummins, 102–103).

Pictured in the top right corner, with hands together in reverence, is a group of gods whose symbolic presence allows them to become witnesses to creation. Among them is Brahma, Shiva, and Nandi, the sacred bull. The surrounding ocean, while chaotic and inhospitable, is also described as amniotic, acting as the womb in which creation was made. Compare to another illustration from the Pahari Hills of the same scene at the Walters Art Museum (acc. W.906). While similarly composed, the present painting is much more successful in capturing Vishnu's restful pose, trading rigidity for soft languor, which becomes apparent in the subtle placement of every limb.

The present image bears similarities to several paintings by Sajnu, a 19th-century Mandi court artist who was highly influenced by works from Kangra and Guler. Compare to an illustration of Shiva and his family in their mountain home, currently at the San Diego Museum of Art (acc. 1990.1140). Notice the similarities between the relaxed poses of Vishnu and Shiva, who are both depicted with supple, fleshy limbs, and faces turned at the more ambitious and challenging three-quarters view. See also another folio attributed to Sajnu, sold at Christie's New York (19 March 2002, lot 146).

References:

Cummins, J. & Srinivasan, D., *Vishnu: Hinduism's Blue-Skinned Savior*, Grantha Corp., Ocean Township, NJ, 2011.



Ruler and consort seated in a composite palanquin

Guler, 19th century

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Folio: 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 7 $\frac{5}{8}$ in. (13.5 x 19.5 cm.)

Provenance:

Acquired in 1960, thence by descent.

Composite forms were a popular theme in Indian miniature painting, depicting animals, demons, or other figures made up of an amalgam of animals or people. Here, a group of six humans intertwine to form a palanquin, carried by two servants in flowing *jamās*. Within the structure, a ruler (denoted by the soft nimbus surrounding his head) is seated against a bolster cushion in conversation with his consort. The figures are garbed in soft lilac and earthy green with contrasting yet complimentary orange and yellow tones, creating a color palette that is particularly pleasing. The bare background displays a pale blue hue, with soft green and delicate tufts of grass below.

For another example of a 19th-century composite palanquin painting, see the collection of San Francisco's Asian Art Museum (acc. 1988.51.10.)



A nayika preparing to meet her beloved

Kangra, mid-19th century

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 7 $\frac{2}{3}$ x 5 in. (19.5 x 12.7 cm.)

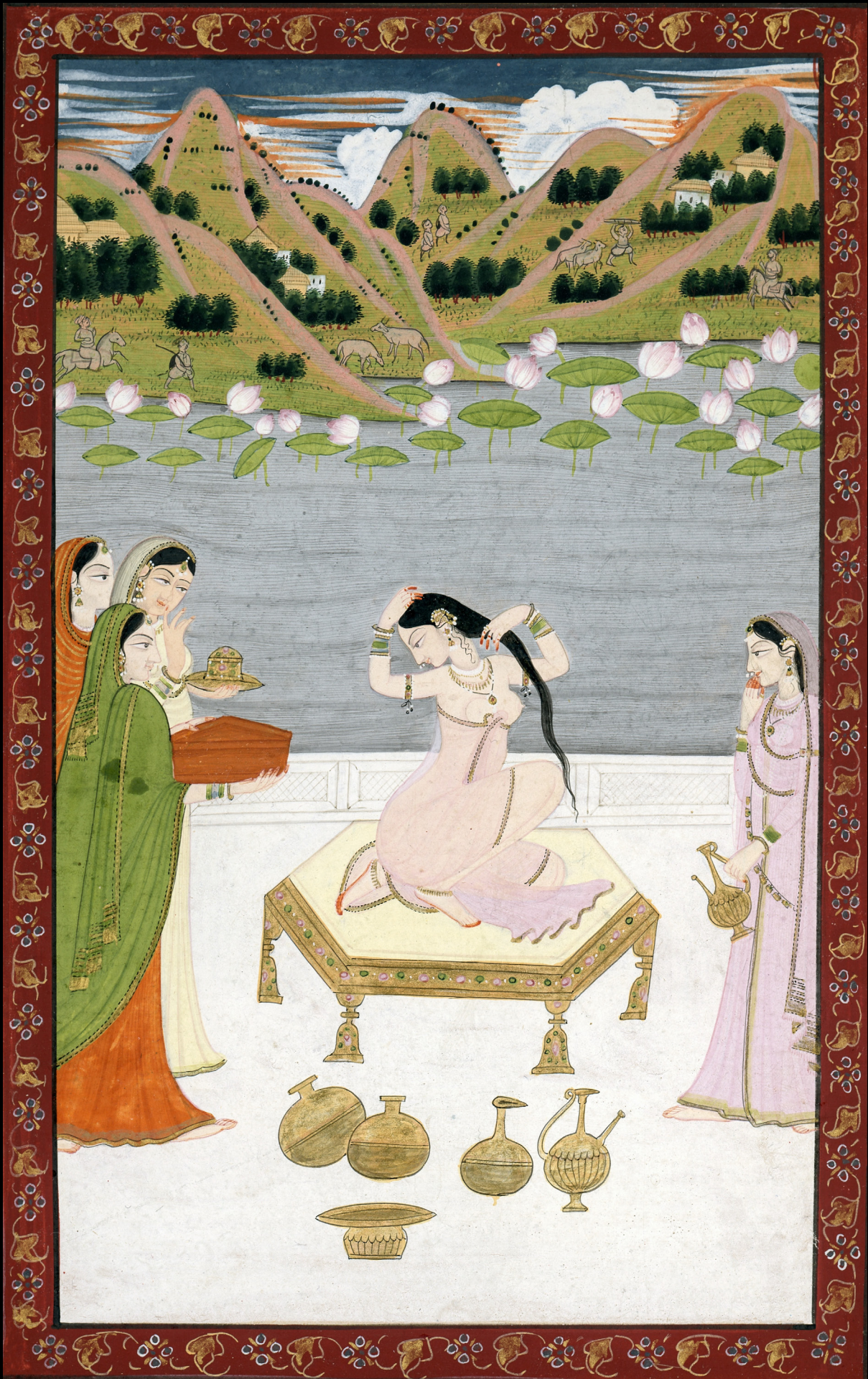
Folio: 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 7 in. (26.7 x 17.8 cm.)

Provenance:

Christie's New York, 6 July 1978, lot 64.

The collection of Dr. Alec Simpson.

A *nayika* kneels on a gold and jeweled plinth, naked except for a transparent wrap and gold jewelry. Her lithe body turns as she wrings out her long black hair on the white marble terrace of the *zenana*. The woman is accompanied by four attentive handmaidens holding vessels that contain body oils, perfumes, ointments and lac for the palms of her hands and soles of her feet. As she prepares to greet her lover, the air is tense with anticipation. The blue, cloudy sky is streaked with red, rendering an evening sunset. In the middle distance rises a gray lotus-filled pond, the blossoms and leaves large and freshly blooming. In the far distance, a village set among steep hillsides is visible. Amidst its population of cowherds and small structures, two tiny mounted nobles gallop in from the left and right. Compare these landscape features to a work signed by the artist Har Jaimal in W.G. Archer's *Visions of Courtly India*, 1976, no. 73 and 74.



A princess enjoying paan on a terrace

Guler, circa 1790–1800

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 7 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 7 in. (18.7 x 17.8 cm.)

Folio: 9 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 8 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (23.2 x 21.3 cm.)

Provenance:

Spink & Son Ltd., London, 1985.

Seated on an open white marble terrace before a blossoming tree and flanking cypresses, the princess strikes a ruler's pose. She sits in a relaxed posture while wearing a courtly turban with an elaborate *sarpech*, atop a grand throne. The princess lifts a piece of *paan* to her mouth while two maids wait on her with a betel box and a *chowrie*. The ducks, captured in motion as they approach a small fountain in the foreground, highlight the fleeting moment frozen by this anonymous artist.

The painting is composed with a broad and vibrant color palette indicative of the Guler style. This naturalistic style of traditional Indian painting was developed by Hindu artists who were previously trained in the Mughal court. Paintings like this resulted from the patronage of Guler Rajas and typically possess a particular delicacy and spirituality, evidenced by the present composition.

Compare to four illustrations with similar female figures and vegetation published in Archer, *Indian Paintings in the Punjab Hills*, London, 1973, p.118, nos. 65–68.



Illustration to a Ragamala series: Tilangi Ragini

Kangra, circa 1800

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 9 x 6 ½ in. (22.9 x 16.5 cm.)

Folio: 10 ¾ x 8 in. (27.3 x 20.3 cm.)

Provenance:

Private English collection.

The following two *ragamala* paintings are based on Mesakarna's system of *ragamalas*, rather than the more prevalent Rajasthani and 'Painter's' systems of *ragamala* painting. This system is based on the 1570 A.D. manuscript entitled *Ragamala*, written by Mesakarna, a court priest from Rewa. The first half of the manuscript describes each musical mode as a personality, while the second half relates them to a sound in nature or in the household—whether it be the sound of a barking dog, fire and wind, or churning butter. This became the exclusive system of *ragamala* painting in the Pahari Hills, from where these manuscripts hail. In his book entitled *Ragamala Painting*, Klaus Ebeling explains how the visual system developed in the Pahari Hills:

Their painters established by visual example, and by copying each other's paintings, an iconographic tradition based on a curious mixture of both series of Mesakarna's verses, frequent wordplays around the name of the raga itself, and a number of unexplainable iconographies (64).

The present painting depicts Tilangi Ragini, described by Mesakarna in the first half of his manuscript as "A woman with beautiful lips, voice, dress and flower garland, in the company of girls and fanned with a yak hair whisk" (verse no. 41), and in his second half as akin to a "grindstone and iron" (verse no. 107). While this is not always the case with *ragamalas*, the present painting follows Mesakarna's text to a T. Seated against a large bolster cushion, Tilangi is shown taking a flower ornament from her companion. Two other women keep busy stringing flowers into garlands which they offer up to her. Combining both halves of Mesakarna's text into one image, the artist also depicts two men in the background, sharpening a sword on a circular grindstone.

References:

Ebeling, Klaus, *Ragamala Painting*, Ravi Kumar, 1973.



Illustration to a Ragamala series: Srihathi Ragini

Kangra, circa 1800

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 9 1/8 x 6 5/8 in. (23.2 x 16.8 cm.)

Folio: 10 3/4 x 8 in. (27.3 x 20.3 cm.)

Provenance:

Private English collection.

The present painting depicts Srihathi Ragini, wife of Raga Malkos. Described by Mesakarna in his first series as resembling a “golden cord” (verse no. 109) and in his second series as a woman carrying a veena with “eyes and face like lotus” (verse no. 29) she appears here draped in transparent wine-colored fabric and carrying a golden veena. Beside her are likely Malasri (carrying the golden platter) and Bhupali (carrying the flower garland)—two other *raginis* who are described by Mesakarna as being Srihathi’s companions. Srihathi appears once again in the background washing a white garment in a large basin, her veena set beside her. Another woman brings her a washing stone as a courtier looks on from a terrace window. While this does not seem to adhere to any known Srihathi iconography, it is possibly a play on the name of the *ragamala* itself.

References:

Ebeling, Klaus, *Ragamala Painting*, Ravi Kumar, 1973.



Illustration to a Baramasa series: The Month of Pausha

Kangra, circa 1810

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 9 x 5 3/8 in. (22.9 x 13.7 cm.)

Folio: 11 x 8 in. (27.9 x 20.3 cm.)

Provenance:

Royal Mandi Collection.

Private European collection, acquired from the above in 1969.

Baramasa (or ‘the twelve months’) in Indian poetry expresses the many emotions of love—particularly that of the *nayika* longing for her beloved—against the backdrop of the changing seasons. The poet Keshavdas contributed greatly to the popularity of the *baramasa*, his version being favored by the artists within the Kangra school who were known for their charming depictions of romance. The present painting illustrates the winter month of Pausha (December–January), identified by a verso inscription of Keshavdas’ poetry describing the mood of the month:

*Icy is the water, cold and unappealing are the
clothes and bed upon which one sleeps.*

*So says Keshavdas, the sky and the land are so
frigid as to destroy life.*

*Men and women massage with oil and wear
cotton to keep warm.*

Whether king or pauper this is their only activity.

*The days are short, the nights are long and
unappealing if one’s lover is angry.*

*Keep this in mind oh lovers and do not go down
this path.*

The composition also includes many features that point to the season. As Pausha is not the time of year to quarrel with one’s lover, Krishna and Radha are shown in union, seated in conversation beside a brazier of glowing coals, cloaked in orange and green shawls to provide extra warmth. In the distance beyond the terrace, figures are massaged with oil (a popular wintertime activity), and men and women sit and roam throughout the village. Brilliant gold detailing is flecked throughout, most notably on the splendid garments of the divine couple.

For a similar depiction of the month of Pausha see W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, London, 1973, vol. II, no. 3(ii) p. 335. Both paintings are enclosed within fine floral-patterned spandrels and feature Krishna and Radha seated on a terrace overlooking a village with strikingly similar architectural details, figures receiving oil massages, and hills in the background.

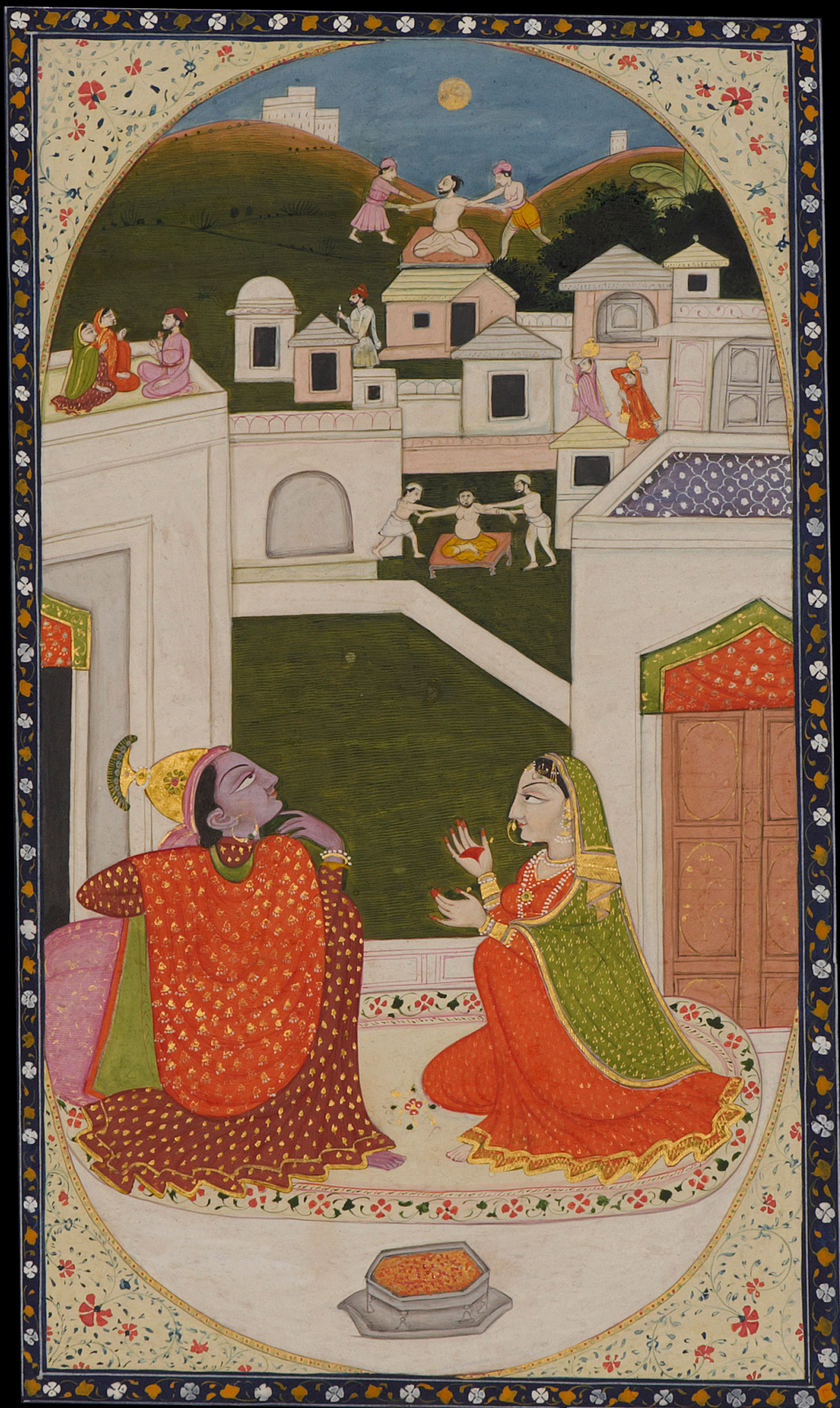


Illustration to the 'Large' Guler-Basohli Bhagavata Purana: The Liberation of Nalakuvara and Manigriva

Attributed to Manaku

Guler-Basohli, circa 1760–1765

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 9 1/8 x 13 1/4 in. (23.3 x 33.5 cm.)

Folio: 11 1/4 x 16 in. (28.9 x 41 cm.)

Provenance:

The collection of Brendan Garry (d. 16 September 2011).

The collection of Siva Swaminathan (d. 26 March 2014).

This painting depicts a scene from the tenth book of the Bhagavata Purana, which captures young Krishna's penchant for mischief. After being caught repeatedly trying to steal butter by his foster mother, Yasodha, she tied him to a wooden mortar to keep him from trouble. Many years prior to this, two *yakshas*, Nalakuvara and Manigriva (sons of Kubera), were cursed for their pride and bound in the form of two arjuna trees. Through his omniscience, Krishna knew the arjuna trees contained the souls of these *yakshas*—carrying the mortar on his back and wedging it between the trees, the young hero used his great strength to uproot them, thus freeing the two brothers from their bondage. The *yakshas* are shown crowned in the center of the painting, offering praise to Krishna to express their gratitude.

The present illustration comes from a series dated to 1760–1765, commonly known as the 'Large' Guler-Basohli Bhagavata Purana, or the 'Fifth' Guler-Basohli Bhagavata Purana. This series is known for its use of broad landscapes with few figures, exemplary of a transitional Basohli style. Each painting in the series has an identifying inscription on the reverse in *gurmukhi* and *nagari* scripts—the present painting is labeled 'Leaf 35' in *gurmukhi*, and inscribed 'Bhagavata Purana, 10th Chapter, 10th book' in Sanskrit. The leaves have since been dispersed throughout the world, some of which can now be found in the Victoria & Albert Museum, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the Archer Collection (see W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, London, 1973; *Visions of Courtly India*, London and New York, 1976, no. 8, p. 15; and W.G. Archer and Edwin Binney 3rd, *Rajput Miniatures from the Collection of Edwin Binney 3rd*, Portland 1968, nos. 55a and 55b, pp. 74–75 for other paintings).

This painting was likely executed by the master Manaku, older brother of Nainsukh, even if he was not responsible for completing the entire series. Manaku has been named as the illustrating artist for a Gita Govinda series completed in the 1730s, as well as the 'Small' Guler Bhagavata Purana completed between 1740 and 1750. Similarities between works in both of these earlier series to the 1760s Bhagavata Purana indicate that Manaku had a part in completing multiple pieces from the later series.

Compare the *yakshas* in the present work to *The Sage Kardama Renounces the World*, from the 'Small' Guler Bhagavata Purana in the collection of the Lahore Museum (see B. N. Goswamy, *Manaku of Guler*, New Delhi, 2017, p.405, no. B35). The same careful rendering of facial hair and ornate jewelry support the claim that Manaku was the author of both. In addition, realistic detail is ascribed to the trees across Manaku's known oeuvre, replicated in the arjuna trees shown here.

While some scholars argue that this later Bhagavata Purana was illustrated by Fattu, son of Manaku, it is clear that the series was drawn by a number of different hands. Since these series were typically completed in chronological order, following the progression of the text, the present example would have been executed earlier than many others within the series, bolstering the plausibility that this painting was indeed drawn by the hand of Manaku.







Illustration to the 'Large' Guler-Basohli Bhagavata Purana: Satadhanva, Akrura, and Kratvarma in Discussion

Attributed to the first generation after Nainsukh and Manaku

Guler-Basohli, circa 1760–1765

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 10 ¾ x 15 in. (27.4 x 38 cm.)

Folio: 11 ¾ x 16 ½ in. (29.7 x 40.8 cm.)

The present illustration comes from the tenth book of the Bhagavata Purana which describes episodes from the life of Krishna. This episode recounts the story of the Syamantaka, a precious gem which was presented to Satrajit by the sun god Surya and accounted for the god's dazzling appearance. Krishna becomes embroiled in the gem's repeated theft and recovery after being wrongfully accused of stealing it by Satrajit. When Krishna recovers the jewel and returns it to Satrajit to clear his name, Satrajit has a change of heart and offers Krishna both the Syamantaka jewel and his beautiful daughter, Satyabhama, who was considered a jewel among women. While Krishna refuses the gift of the jewel, he accepts Satyabhama as his new wife, angering Akrura and Kratvarma who had sought Satyabhama's hand for their own. Akrura and Kratvarma appear here trying to convince Satadhanva to kill Satrajit for his indiscretion and steal the gem for himself.

The three men appear framed in a large double-paned window. The bearded Satadhanva, on the left, listens to the mustachioed Akrura and Kratvarma on the right as they plot to steal the precious gem. All three wear *jamās* with bold patterns that complement the gold geometric motif of the terrace walls outside. This image utilizes the unusually large format in a striking way, filling it with prominent yet simplified architectural elements rather than breaking up the space with small details—an example of how the younger generation of Seu family artists were able to throw off the constraints of the traditional miniaturist.

The present painting comes from a series referred to by Archer as the 'Large' Guler-Basohli Bhagavata Purana or the 'Fifth' Basohli Bhagavata Purana of 1760–1765. In her discussion of four paintings from the same set in the Chester Beatty Library, Linda York Leach explains:

The series, by a number of different hands, is one of the richest sources of information about the specific ways in which Pahari miniaturists gradually relaxed their styles of drawing and developed a cleaner, more open and more naturalistic idiom.

(L.Y. Leach, p.1048)

B.N. Goswamy and Eberhard Fischer note that the series is often ascribed to Manaku's son, Fattu, who lived for a time with his uncle Nainsukh, and thus incorporated the styles of both masters into his own work (Goswamy, p. 689). Compare to a folio from the same series at the Philadelphia Museum of Art depicting *Uddhava visiting Vrindavan at Krishna's Bidding* (acc. 1996-120-2). The Philadelphia folio exhibits a similar format, with Uddhava and Vrindavan framed within a red, double-paned window, and surrounded by stark architectural forms. See also a folio from the 'Large' Guler-Basohli Bhagavata Purana depicting the return of the Syamantaka, published by Archer in *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, 1973, Basohli, 22(xii).

References:

Goswamy (ed.), et al., *Masters of Indian Painting*, New Delhi, 2011.

L.Y. Leach, *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings from the Chester Beatty Library*, Vol.II, 1995.







Sambara and Rati

Guler-Chamba, circa 1780

Opaque watercolor on paper

Image: 6 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 9 $\frac{5}{8}$ in. (16.8 x 24.6 cm.)

Folio: 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (21.6 x 29.2 cm.)

Provenance:

Maggs Bros Ltd., London.

Private collection, acquired from the above 30 June 1984.

Emerging from his humble cave dwelling is the demon Sambara alongside Rati, the Hindu goddess of love and counterpart to Kama. In a past life, the beautiful Rati was married to Kama before he was incinerated by Shiva. Devastated by the death of her husband, Rati underwent severe penance and was eventually granted the boon of his reincarnation. In order to accompany her husband into his rebirth, Rati abandoned her former body to be reborn as Mayavati, the wife of Sambara. Rati was then told that Kama's reincarnation, Pradyumna, would someday slay Sambara, reuniting the lovers once again.

Compared to Mayavati-Rati's small frame and delicate features, Sambara exudes virile power as he puts his arm around her. His large body is covered in finely rendered hairs and his eyebrow is raised in a seductive manner, eyes filled with lust. Despite the sexual tension in this scene, however, Mayavati-Rati never sleeps with Sambara, who is technically her husband. Although Rati is the Hindu goddess of carnal desire, lust, and sexual pleasure, she remains pure and untouched, donning an illusionary form to enchant Sambara. Saving herself for her true husband, Pradyumna, Mayavati only ever gives Sambara her shadow in bed—hence the name *Maya*, meaning illusion.

The present painting depicts Sambara leading Mayavati from a cave made of striking pink and gray rocks. The lush green Pahari foothills are interspersed with diminutive trees, making the pseudo-couple appear larger than life. Belonging to a transitional period, this painting exhibits traits from both the Guler and Chamba schools of painting. Compare to another folio depicting *Shiva Chasing Mohini* from the same set, currently at the Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh (Vishwa Chander Ohri & Roy C. Craven Jr., *Painters of the Pahari Schools*, Marg Publications, 1998, p. 102).

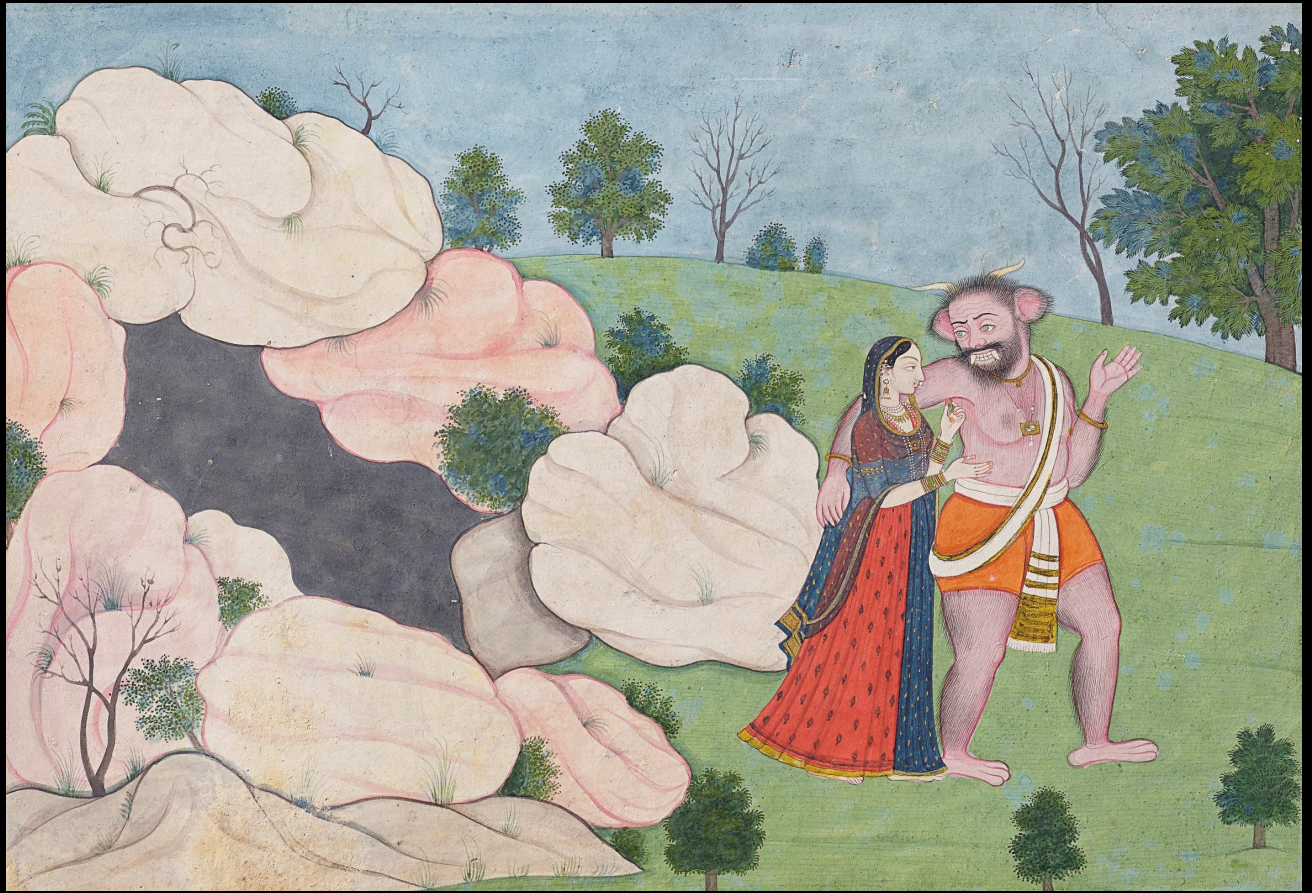


Illustration to the Bhagavata Purana: Pradyumna Weds Rukmavati

Nepal, circa 1775

Ground mineral pigments on paper

Image: 13 ¼ x 20 in. (33.7 x 50.8 cm.)

Folio: 14 ⅜ x 20 ½ in. (36.5 x 52 cm.)

Provenance:

Private American collection, by 1972.

Published:

Himalayan Art Resources (himalayanart.org), item no. 7505.

The present painting is from an important series depicting the exploits of Krishna as described in Book Ten of the Hindu epic, the Bhagavata Purana. The Bhagavata Purana chronicles the ten avatars of Lord Vishnu, each of whom must save the world from danger, destroy evil, and protect virtue. Shown here is Krishna's son Pradyumna—the incarnation of Kama, the god of love—marrying the beautiful Rukmavati. Their son, Aniruddha, later becomes embroiled in a love affair with the princess Usha, starting a war between his grandfather, Krishna, and Usha's demon father, Banasura.

The holy city of Dwarka, home of Krishna, appears sprawled across the folio in a stunning birds-eye view comprised of multiple perspectives—a characteristic feature of this Nepalese series. Pradyumna and Rukmavati are depicted in the center of a large wedding celebration, surrounded by a myriad of attendants and courtiers. Pradyumna—identifiable by his characteristic blue skin symbolic of his relation to Krishna—is adorned with a golden crown and wreathed in flowers as he grasps the arm of his bride. See a painting from the same series at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (acc. 2019.64) depicting Pradyumna with his first wife, Mayavati, entering Dwarka for the first time.

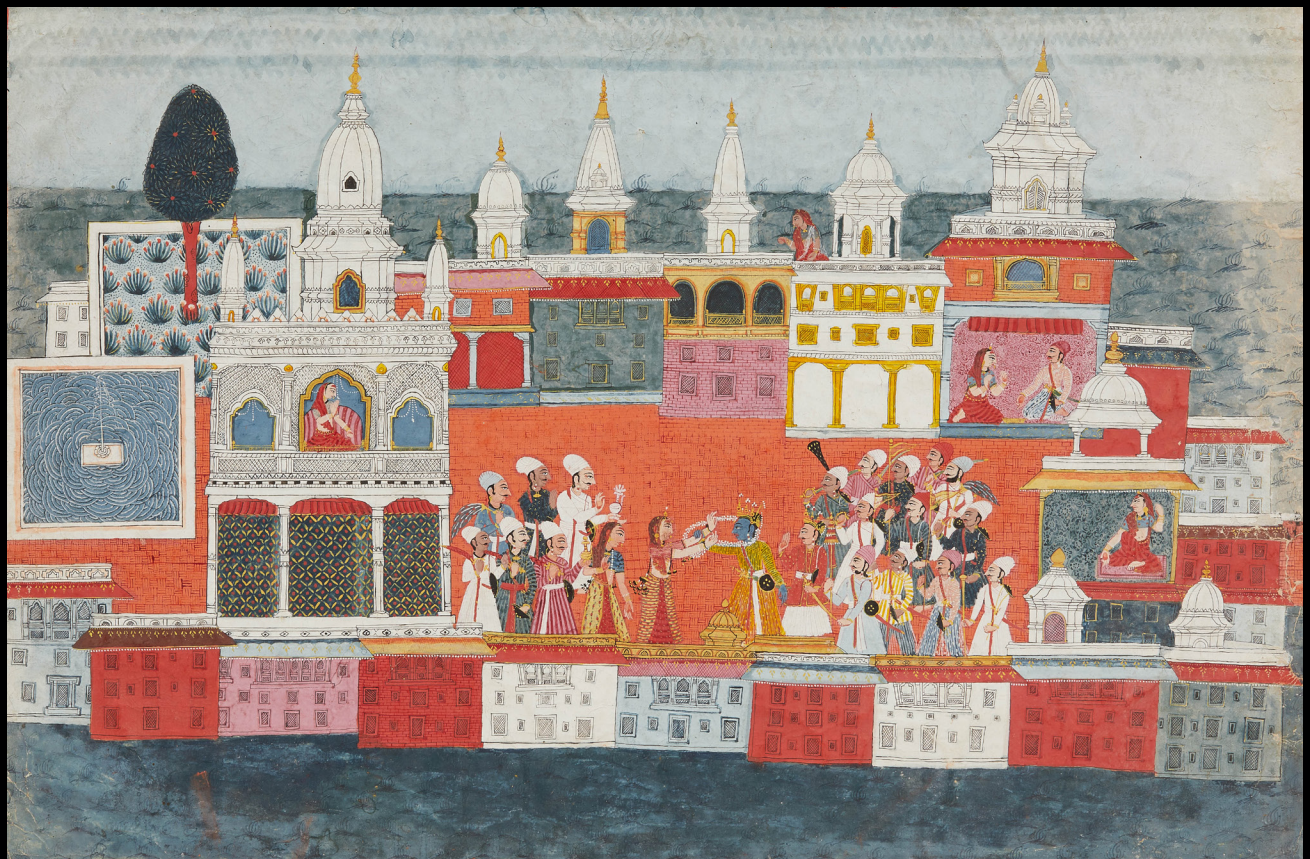






Illustration to the Bhagavata Purana: Battle between Banasura and Krishna

Nepal, circa 1775

Ground mineral pigments on paper

Image: 13 ½ x 20 ¼ in. (34.2 x 51.4 cm.)

Folio: 15 x 21 ¾ in. (38 x 55.2 cm.)

Provenance:

Doris Wiener, inv. no. P1337 SHRP-F51-0.

Christie's New York, 20 March 2012, lot 2640.

Published:

Himalayan Art Resources (himalayanart.org), item no. 7506.

The present painting depicts the legendary battle between Lord Krishna and Banasura as described in Book Ten of the Bhagavata Purana. At the left is Agnigarh, the flaming fortress constructed by Banasura to keep his daughter, Usha, in isolation. Krishna—blue skinned and seated astride his flying *vahana*, Garuda—attacks the fortress in order to reclaim his grandson, Aniruddha, who fell in love with the beautiful Usha after she kidnapped him. With his *chakra*, Krishna slays both Banasura's horse and charioteer. Riding on a golden chariot, Banasura comes face to face with Krishna. Each of his one thousand arms grasps a weapon—his proper right arms holding arrows and his proper left arms holding bows. Directly behind him is his general Kumbhanda, who stands with one hand raised as if advising his king. Another golden chariot carries Balarama, Krishna's elder brother, who holds a *talwar* sword instead of his usual scythe.

Although traditionally an Indian subject, the worship of Vishnu, particularly his form as Krishna, was also prominent in Nepal. The painting's vibrant color palette, with crisscrossing red and yellow arrows, vast green background with stylized repeated hillocks, and striped blue sky in the upper register, are clear Rajasthani imports. The stylization of the flames that engulf Agnigarh as well as the use of ground mineral pigments instead of opaque watercolors, however, are Nepalese touches that make this particular series unique.

This painting is executed in a large format, unusual among Nepalese paintings, but distinct to this known series of which two folios reside in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (acc. 2019.64 and 2019.65). According to the museum:

This painting is part of an ambitious series numbering around 100 folios, now dispersed, which all display the same dimensions, the distinctive red border and the aerial perspectives onto complex architectural constructions, features shared with the later court painting of Udaipur.

See also another depiction of the flaming fortress Agnigarh from the same set, currently at the San Diego Museum of Art (acc. 1990.173). While there are a number of Bhagavata Purana series produced in the classical Indian canon, this is the only known set of Nepalese origin.







Illustration to the Ramayana: Vasishtha Teaches Rama and Lakshmana

Mewar, 1700–1710

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 9 ¼ x 14 ¾ in. (23.5 x 37.5 cm.)

Folio: 10 ¼ x 15 ⅞ in. (26 x 40.3 cm.)

The present painting depicts a scene (numbered ‘71’ in the inscription above) from the Bala Kanda, the first book of the Valmiki Ramayana which recounts the upbringing of Rama and Lakshmana. Instructed by Rishi Vasishtha, the brothers learn a variety of skills necessary for leading lives as princes of the realm. They’re shown wrestling two mustachioed men against a pale-green backdrop in the top left corner, studying the Vedas in a small architectural element, learning to swim in the water feature at the bottom left, receiving instruction from Rishi Vasishtha in the center, and riding elephants and charioteering to the far right.

The illustration displays a number of features characteristic of the Mewar style—in particular, the red and yellow borders, the prominence of primary colors throughout the composition, and the foliage that spreads out radially. In his discussion of a similar folio, Dr. Pratapaditya Pal remarks that:

We find [here] a Mewar artist, even as late as the year 1700, preferring a simple, direct mode of representation to the use of illusionistic devices that would create a more pictorial composition. We seem to be watching a performance on a stage that lacks a backdrop, where the details of the setting are left to the audience’s imagination.

(Pal, p. 100)

Compare to another Ramayana folio depicting the *Abduction of Sita*, currently at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (acc. M.86.345.3). Note the bold color-blocked background partitioned by undulating green stripes and broken up by scattered white flowers—a common feature of Mewar paintings from the period.

References:

Pal, P., *The Classical Tradition in Rajput Painting from the Paul F. Walter Collection*, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, 1978.

॥ रामा ॥ श्रीधमा ॥ ॥ वेद जगतां ॥ लिखतां ॥ आतमा हे न लोमानतां ॥ रथ विद्या ॥ हा ध्यां री विद्या ॥ मल विद्या ॥ इत्यादि कखाषता
तुआ ॥

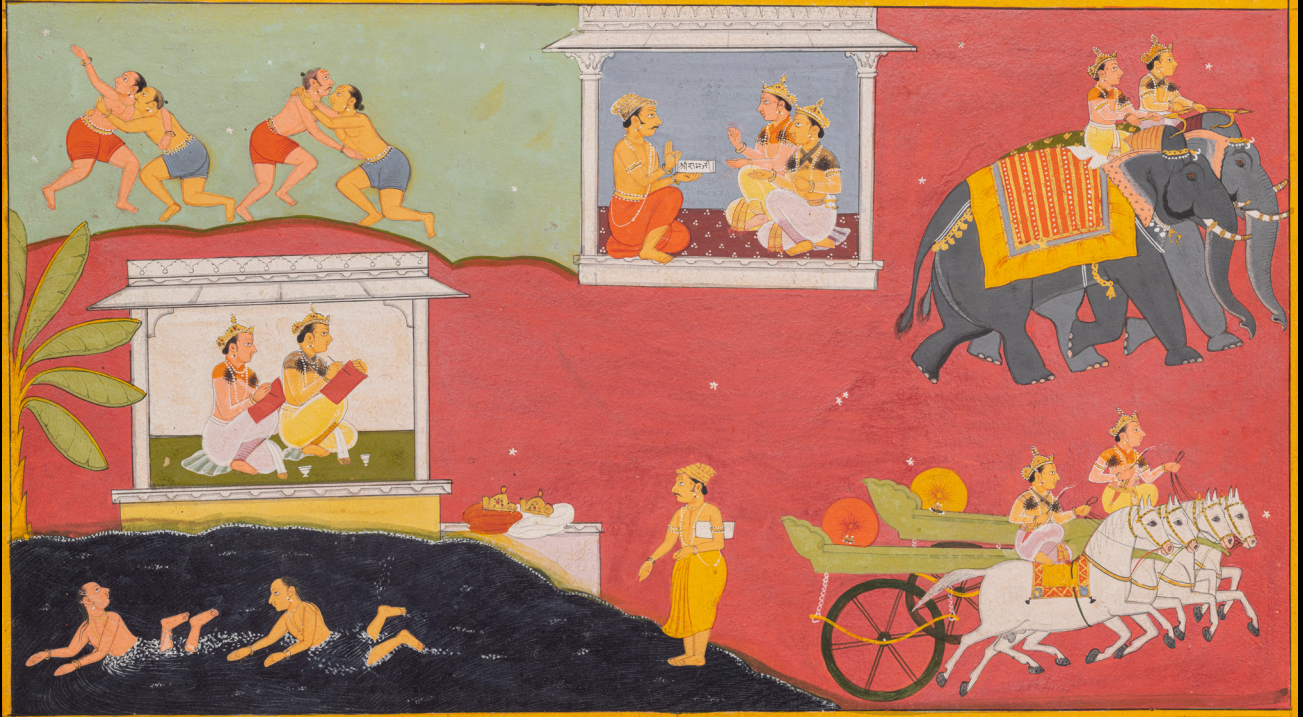


Illustration to the Ramayana: Rishi Vishvamitra Visits King Dasharatha

Mewar, early 18th century

Opaque watercolor on paper

Image: 8 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 14 $\frac{5}{8}$ in. (20.3 x 35.6 cm.)

Folio: 10 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 15 $\frac{5}{8}$ in. (25.4 x 38.1 cm.)

This folio (numbered '242' in the inscription above) illustrates a scene from the Bala Kanda, Book one of the Valmiki Ramayana, wherein Rishi Vishvamitra visits the court of King Dasharatha. Rishi Vishvamitra, who was living in the forest performing Vedic rituals, was repeatedly disturbed by the demons Mericha and Subahu. Wanting to rid himself of the bothersome demons, Rishi Vishvamitra pleads with King Dasharatha to send his four sons to the forest with him, asserting that he and the other sages in the king's court are aware of Rama's capabilities—even though Rama is only sixteen, he can easily slay Mericha and Subahu. Reluctantly, the king agrees.

The discussion between Rishi Vishvamitra and King Dasharatha is depicted in the right half of the composition, with the figures seated against large bolster cushions atop a stark white carpet. They are flanked by four attendants, two standing and waving *chowries*, the other two seated on a deep green floral-patterned carpet. To the left, Rama and his three brothers, Lakshmana, Bharata, and Shatrughna, sit in conversation on a white floral terrace.

The architectural elements and backgrounds are executed in the bold colors of the traditional Rajasthani palette, from the rich brown of the terrace surrounding an outdoor fountain, to the bright reds and greens of the palace. While painted in the Rajasthani style, Mughal influence can be seen in the dark shading on the armpits of many of the men—a feature that soon became regular in Mewari paintings of this type. Compare to a similarly composed folio from a Mewari Ramayana series at the Norton Simon Museum (acc. P.2008.2.5).

॥ रामा ॥ बाल ॥ २४२ ॥ पछे बसि जनक राजा रो कुल कहैं हैं ॥ प्रथम राजा ने मा ॥ ने मा रो मिथल ॥ तीणी वंस विभे राजा जनक कुआ ॥ तीणी मिथल
 राकु सधवन कुआ ॥ कु सधवन रो बेटी पणरी धी ॥ नरत सनु घन हैं ॥



Inebriated ascetics

Rajasthan, circa 1750–1760

Opaque watercolor on paper

Image: 8 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (21.9 x 14.6 cm.)

Folio: 9 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 6 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (25.1 x 17.5 cm.)

Caricatures of inebriated ascetics showing the effects of opium and *bhang* were a popular theme in Indian painting from the 17th through the 19th centuries. These substances were used by holy men to aid them in achieving a state of spiritual ecstasy, especially in the festivals and rituals associated with Shiva. Although such illustrations were also produced by Mughal and Pahari schools, the Rajput representations tend towards ridicule, a feature that can also be seen in Rajasthani caricatures of *firangis* (foreigners).

The present painting illustrates a *chandu-khana*, which roughly translates to ‘opium den.’ At the top of the scene two men beneath a tent are preparing *bhang*, a drink made with marijuana, with a couple of onlookers eager to fill their bowls. Below them a group of men revel in their intoxicated states, some crouching with their eyes closed, others smoking opium from their *nargilas*. A number of them are depicted shirtless, exaggerating their scrawny and bony appearances. The ascetics are arranged in rough rows against a plain brown background (almost as if a series of figure studies), a compositional model that appears in other paintings of this theme. The resulting lack of perspective informs the Rajput origins of the painting. For another 18th-century depiction of this subject from Rajasthan, see the San Diego Museum of Art (acc. 1990.722). Note the similar style of composition as well as the individualized rendering of each figure.

References:

Crill, R., *Marwar Painting: A History of the Jodhpur Style*, India Book House, 1999.

Welch, S.C. & Masteller, K., *From the Mind, Heart, and Hand: Persian, Turkish, and Indian Drawings from the Stuart Cary Welch Collection*, Yale University Press, 2004.



Untitled (Woman Standing)**Jamini Roy (Indian, 1887–1972), circa 1920***Tempera painting on cardboard**27 x 14 ¼ in. (68.6 x 36.2 cm.)***Provenance:**

Private New York collection.

Private Pennsylvania collection.

One of the earliest and most important artists of the Indian modernist movement, Jamini Roy began his artistic training in the European academic style. In response to a burgeoning sense of nationalism, from the mid-1920s he became increasingly influenced by indigenous folk art and craft traditions as well as East Asian calligraphy. Roy was particularly inspired by the Kalighat style, producing minimalist works characterized by soft, curvilinear strokes showcasing the artist's control of the brush. These paintings employed imagery from everyday life, such as mother and child figures, and were executed in monochromatic palettes.

The present artwork epitomizes the simplistic style Roy developed during this period in his career. Fluid, sweeping black strokes against a soft gray background form the outline of a woman standing in three-quarters view, her hands crossed in front and her head tilted coyly. Devoid of any identifying features, the painting evokes an inviting yet mysterious atmosphere, ultimately illustrating the artist's mastery of the brush and contour. The piece is signed in Bengali at the lower right.



میرزا محمد علی







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